

JONATHAN SWIFT AND THE STAGE OF THE WORLD:
A STUDY OF SWIFT'S POETRY,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE POEMS ABOUT WOMEN.

By

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Jonathan Swift possessed dramatic powers which, perhaps because of his beliefs about the theatre of his own time, perhaps because of his calling as churchman and moralist, perhaps because of his temperament, were never fulfilled in the writing of plays. In the poems, many of which have plots (a prerequisite for dramatisation), and all of which are short enough to sustain the dramatic mode successfully (for it cannot work long outside its natural milieu), Swift's dramatic skill found fullest expression. Alienated from the contemporary theatre, he was, however, imbued with the notion of an older and greater drama, the drama on the stage of the world, directed by God Himself. In the world-stage figure and the related figure of the Chain of Being, the orthodox Christian world view held by Swift had for centuries found its liveliest expression. When Swift writes about basic personal relationships, he reveals most clearly his orthodox concept of the duties of human beings to one another and to God. It is with such relationships and duties that he is concerned when he writes about women, for woman in his time had little part in public

life. Drama-like in form, concerned with fundamentals in content, the poems about women demonstrate most strikingly the harmony between Swift's literary techniques and orthodox beliefs.

Swift shows concern at woman's inadequacy in performing the human role. He does not excuse the trivial-mindedness of leisured woman, but he recognises her handicaps: she is uneducated, or worse, miseducated. Women's plight is partly the result of men's failure to remember the place of Man in the Chain of Being. Impiously disregarding the humanity of women, men treat them as goddesses to be worshipped or beasts to be used. Women who rise above their disadvantages, however, are characterised by the reasonableness that to an orthodox Christian is the essence of human virtue.

In these poems, Swift also reveals his concept of his own roles on the world-stage, all variations of his basic human role as moralist. To women, he is primarily tutor, effecting his purposes by teasing or flattery. We see him also as courtier, asserting and defending his own prestige in the world, and as lover and poet. The reader of the poems is put into the position of a member of an audience, assessing the characters entirely by what he sees and hears, whether Swift's characters, including himself, are presented in the first person or the third.

Many poems are playlike in structure, consisting of single scenes, or sequences having the shape of a full-length play. The most significant dramatic shape we find is that of "encompassing actions," which according to Thomas B. Stroup's Microcosmos (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), may be derived directly from the concept of the world as a stage, and the related concepts of man and the stage itself as microcosms of that world, all directed by God, the Tester and Teacher.

In the dramatic poetry about human relationships, echoes of the morality play (the psychomachia put into literally theatrical form), and imagery derived from the world-stage concept, provide further evidence of the connection between Swift's world view and the dramatic mode in which he writes of it.

I

INTRODUCTION

In the poetry of Jonathan Swift, master of indirection, we are confronted by a paradox. We find much of it difficult because it seems too easy. Often the first reading of a poem leaves us with two apparently inconsistent impressions: we are in no doubt about the essential lightness of the poem, but at the same time we are aware that in it a significant statement has been made (although we may not yet be able to say exactly what that statement is).¹ The problem lies partly in our own preconceptions about lightness and about poetry, but in so far as it is implicit in the poem itself, I believe, it is one of the results of Swift's use of dramatic technique. When we approach such a poem as if it were a play, we may find that the elusive significance becomes clear and that the apparently disparate elements are brought into harmony. It seems to me that the dominant mode of Swift's poetry is dramatic, and that this predilection for dramatisation is intimately connected with his world view as an orthodox Christian. In both his attitudes and his poetic practices he appears to be deeply imbued with the notion of the world as a stage, one of the figures by which orthodox Christians had for centuries expressed their belief about a Providentially ordered universe. The association between Swift's dramatic approach and his concept of the Christian's position and duty can be seen with particular clearness in the poems, and perhaps most clearly of all in the poems in which he writes about women.

Swift's ability to dramatise realises itself most completely in his poetry. To begin with, many of his poems have plots, and it is self-evident that a plot, however simple, is the necessary groundwork for a

dramatisation. In some of the poems we are considering, he uses dramatised episodes simply to illustrate the points he is expounding. But in many others he presents his topic entirely by means of dramatised action, establishing his characters in a situation, letting them speak and act for themselves and leaving the reader to deduce--with little or no more help--the principle exemplified in the action. Furthermore, all the poems except one are short. A writer with dramatic gifts normally finds the most complete expression of his talent in writing a play. If he uses the dramatic mode in writing a non-dramatic work, the result is likely to be playlike in the greatest number of respects if it is short; the mode, out of its natural setting, can be sustained for only so long.² Although Swift uses dramatic techniques elsewhere in his writings, it is in the material of the poems that he finds the ideal material for dramatisation: simple plots that can be presented briefly.³

The poems are set apart from Swift's other writings in another important respect. In them alone, if we except obviously personal writings such as the correspondence and the Journal to Stella, do we come into apparently direct contact with Swift the man. In some of the poems he writes in his own character, and in some he appears to do so. Perhaps more important, in the poetry he presents us with a self-portrait, in the externalised character that he refers to most frequently as "the Dean." "The Dean" most often represents the Swift that he supposes other people to see, not Swift's own view of himself (which, however, we can often deduce by other means). Nevertheless, the presence in the poems of a character bearing Swift's name or title does much to account for our impression of his close personal involvement in the affairs of which he writes. It is in the poems about women, which include many of his most striking dramatisations, that we most frequently encounter "the Dean."

But in by no means all of the poems about women does "the Dean" appear. The group includes not only the poems in which Swift writes of particular women, his personal acquaintances and friends, but also those such as "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed,"⁴ in which he presents his thoughts about the relationships of men and women through the stories of fictitious characters.

All the poems in the group, however, are personal in another sense. In them, Swift is examining human relationships at the most simple or basic personal level; that is, for the most part he is writing about one to one relationships. Whether he writes of real women and men or of fictitious representatives of the sexes, moreover, his primary concern is with the fundamental realities of the human condition, and the fundamental relationships and duties of human beings to one another and to God. To the Augustan humanists, the human being is by definition a moralist. In Paul Fussell's words, his "primary obligation is the strenuous determination of moral questions."⁵ Furthermore, humanity is the one thing that all people have in common. Whatever else we are--if we may adapt the words of Swift's great fellow-humanist⁶--"we are perpetually men and women." When Swift the man writes about women, or about women in their relationships with other men, he writes about the very phenomenon that the world-stage metaphor and the metaphors related to it were evolved to explain and correct: the behavior of individual human beings⁷ in a divinely governed world.

So far we have been concentrating upon the seriousness that from the beginning may be sensed in the poems. We have said nothing of the richness, vitality and exuberance of the wit and humour that pervade them. But Swift's ability to amuse and delight is part and parcel of his seriousness, and if we ignore the integrally important humour of the poems

we cannot fully understand that seriousness. But because we shall have little occasion for repeating his witticisms, and, more fortunately, even less for the humourless task of dissecting his humour, we shall for long periods take the laughter-provoking aspects of the poems for granted, and our remarks may seem as inappropriately solemn as some of Swift's have seemed to others inappropriately light.

When we feel that it is necessary to make such preliminary statements, we reveal a state of mind that itself calls for comment. The dichotomy between humour and seriousness is at least in some respects⁸ a modern phenomenon, the origin of which is of central importance to our discussion. Modern man so frequently feels the need to spell out the difference between seriousness and solemnity (in the sense of humourlessness, pomposity and sententiousness) largely as a result, it seems to me, of the intellectual and religious revolution of the seventeenth century.

The discoveries and the new methods of the Renaissance scientists led gradually but inexorably to the undermining of belief in revealed religion, and eventually to the undermining of belief in any religion at all. In the opinion of one modern religious man, still believing in "the primacy of the 'truths' of religious experience," the process, beginning with "the undue elevation of empirical 'truth', and an attribution to it of a special privilege to represent reality," came about in the first place largely because the "methods and ... abstractions [of the early scientists] were mistaken for philosophies."⁹ By the end of the seventeenth century, two developments from such ill-begotten philosophies were clearly recognisable to orthodox Christians as a threat to religion itself. Hobbesian materialism was obviously but one step away from atheism. The danger of deism was more insidious. The deist asserted that God had created and

would eventually judge the world, but that having created the natural laws by which the universe operates (and which men could discover by observation), he needed to take no further part in its operation. Thus the deist denied both the operation of Providence and the necessity for revelation in religion.¹⁰ Once people cease to believe that revelation is necessary and begin to believe that reason is all that man needs to comprehend, ultimately, all the mysteries of God's creation, they are well on their way to taking themselves seriously in a way that orthodox Christians cannot do.

With the shift of emphasis from belief in man's continual and perpetual dependence upon God for his well-being to belief in his ability to work out his salvation independently and by means of his human endowments, religious humility was apt to decline, and to be replaced by an exaggerated sense of purely moral responsibility that, without the check of humility, led to a preoccupation with "noble sentiments" and eventually to a disinclination to dwell on the ludicrous aspects of humanity. Indeed, if a man puts all or most of his trust in his own powers, he may well be actually afraid to think too much about his inadequacies, even light-heartedly. It is chiefly here, I think, that the distrust of humorous treatment of serious matters begins.

It is natural that "lightness" should have become most suspect of all in serious poetry. From earliest times the poet had been considered the most powerful of men, to be revered as a prophet or feared as a dangerous madman, inspired or possessed, and in either case the channel for more than human power. Despite the weakening of belief in the supernatural power from which the poet's strength had been supposed to come, the poet's nimbus of authority remained. When the orthodox Christian attitude had

lost its place as the dominant element in the climate of opinion and had been replaced by the kind of "moral seriousness" we have just been discussing, it was hardly surprising that serious poetry became the last place in which humour seemed appropriate. This attitude to poetry, in the ascendant throughout the nineteenth century,¹¹ is still to a large extent with us, and it is one that we need to put aside when we read the poetry of Swift, not least because it was fostered by the very trends that Swift deplored.

The attitude was well established in Swift's own time, together with the theological trends that gave rise to it and that Swift attacked in his poetry¹² and elsewhere. It coloured the thought of even the Christian humanist Johnson, and probably has much to do with his failure to understand his fellow-humanist and contemporary. "In the Poetical Works of Dr. Swift," he tells us,

there is not much upon which the critic can exercise his powers. They are often humorous, almost always light, and have the qualities which recommend such compositions, easiness and gaiety. . . . To divide this Collection into classes, and shew how some pieces are gross, and some are trifling, would be to tell the reader what he knows already, and to find faults of which the author could not be ignorant, who certainly wrote often not to his judgment but his humour.¹³

Johnson is no doubt right about such compositions as the riddles and the pun-filled verses Swift exchanged with Thomas Sheridan and other friends, in which he is obviously writing "to his humour." But in taking it for granted that a humorous composition can have no depth to be explored by the critic (who must, by his own definition of man, be a moralist), that everything that appears light is light, and that "trifles" are contemptible, Johnson exhibits a set of attitudes to lightness¹⁴ far removed from Swift's own attitude, and for that matter, from the attitudes of some of the friends with whom Swift first shared his "trifles."¹⁵

Alexander Pope's comment is perhaps the best known. At the end of his imitation of Horace's Sixth Epistle of the First Book, he writes:

If, after all, we must with Wilmot own,
The Cordial Drop of Life is Love alone,
And Swift cry wisely, "Vive la Bagatelle!"
The Man that loves and laughs, must sure do well. (124-127)¹⁶

Whereas Pope suggests (surely without irony) only that Swift's attitude is wise, Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, comments specifically upon the place of "la Bagatelle" in Swift's writings. In a letter to Swift on July 28, 1721, he recognises one function of the trifle in Swift's method: "Yr bagatelle leads to something better, as fiddlers flourish carelessly before they play a fine air."¹⁷ In a letter of January, 1722, he recognises the trifle as itself a vehicle for seriousness:

I long to see yr. travels, for take it as you will, I do not retract what I said, and will undertake to find, in two pages of yr Bagatelles, more good sence, useful knowledge, and true Religion, than you can show me in the works of nineteen in twenty of the profound Divines and Philosophers of the age.¹⁸

The slight sententiousness of the comment, as well as the fact that he finds it necessary to make it, may remind us that Bolingbroke himself was not an orthodox Christian. We wonder too, of course, what Swift had said to prompt the comment, though we may imagine it was merely a polite disclaimer of the compliments of the earlier letter. And we note that Bolingbroke had not yet seen Gulliver's Travels at the time when he included it among Swift's "Bagatelles."

Swift gives his own view clearly enough, despite the confusion of syntax, in his letter to John Gay of March 28, 1728, and the connotation he gives to "trifle" seems especially significant when we note that he is writing about the works of other people as well as about his own. "The Beggars Opera hath knockt down Gulliver," he tells Gay, "I hope to see Popes Dulness knock down the Beggars Opera, but not till it hath fully

done its Jobb."19 Having alluded to the report given by Gay (in the letter to which this is a reply) that The Beggar's Opera has already earned him between seven and eight hundred pounds, he goes on to suggest that if Gay were prudent he "could never fail of writing two or three such trifles every year to expose vice and make people laugh with innocency does more public service than all the Ministers of State from Adam to Walpol."20

To Swift himself, then, actually describing works of serious moral intention as "trifles", there can have been no paradox in considering "trifles" important. In "Epistle to a Lady," he claims that unpretentious mockery is the very essence of his own satiric method. Certainly it is a way in which he gives relief to his own feelings, an outlet for his own moral indignation: "Like the ever-laughing Sage,/ In a Jest I spend my Rage" (167-168); but it is also the characteristic means by which he makes his contribution as a reformer, by which he fulfils his own peculiar function in the world. In the attack on villains, let others "apply Alecto's Whip" (179). His part is to "Strip their Bums" (178). "If I can but fill my Nitch," he says, "I attempt no higher Pitch" (171-172). It is hardly necessary to remark that on occasion Swift did not hesitate to use the whip himself, and indeed, even within this poem he is, apparently, inconsistent. He eschews the grand manner of writing that goes against his "nat'ral Vein" (136) on the grounds that "Still to lash, and lashing Smile,/ Ill befits a lofty Stile" (139-140). It would obviously be rash to take all the great ironist says at its face value. But "Epistle to a Lady" leaves us no room to doubt that to Swift seriousness and soberness in his own work, far from seeming natural companions, frequently seemed natural enemies.

Such an obviously satirical "trifle", however, does not baffle the reader at first sight, even if he discovers greater depth in it at subsequent readings. When we turn to one of the trifles that do at first baffle us, we may find that there is more to our problem than the inherited distrust of lightness in serious matters. Swift's method as well as his manner may catch us by surprise. A first encounter with "Baucis and Philemon," for example, may leave an unwary reader with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with his comprehension of the poem. As soon as he reads more thoughtfully, he discovers that this earthy burlesque of the tale from Ovid's Metamorphoses is not merely a burlesque but is itself a metamorphosis of the pagan moral myth into a Christian one.²¹ Ovid has exalted virtuous human behaviour and has demonstrated that the gods require it and reward it. Swift makes not only Baucis and Philemon, but also the "saints"²² who in his poem take the place of Jupiter and Mercury, basically good but drastically flawed human beings, and thus he invites us to honour goodness but never to lose sight of the facts of human imperfection. And the good humour of his presentation of these imperfect human beings, his rich appreciation of the humour of their encounters and reactions, prompts us to respond to them in a similar spirit; love for our fellows, we are reminded, should not depend upon our being able to admire them. If the reader did not appreciate the metamorphosis of the myth in the first place, it may be that, not expecting it, he missed the clues that in retrospect are clear. Noticing first, perhaps, merely that some of the usual pointers have been withheld, the careful reader must eventually come to the realisation that except occasionally in his use of adjectives,²³ at no point has Swift made an unequivocal or explicit statement of his attitude toward the characters and their behaviour. Instead, setting up

the situation by narrative, he lets his characters act and speak for themselves. If we can deduce his own attitude at all, it is only because it is he who has transformed the characters and selected their activities in the first place. Presumably it is at this stage that his benevolence has been transmitted to us. Our final impression of the characters comes almost entirely from what he has made it possible for us to see and hear for ourselves. If we at first failed to understand, in short, it was largely because we did not expect to have to understand in this way: we did not expect a dramatisation.²⁴

Throughout his work, prose and poetry, Swift shows a consistent dislike for the theatre of his time, to which he refers and alludes frequently. In his Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners²⁵ (1709) he actually makes a formal attack upon it. In the whole canon, only two or three times does he have anything favourable to say of it²⁶ or of those connected with it. But although he saw the contemporary theatre as at best trivial and at worst immoral and irreligious, and although nearly all his allusions to it are derogatory, his stage imagery seems nevertheless to have had a particular value for him, and this is because most of it is related to a theatre to which he could take no exception, the theatre of the world, presided over by God Himself. The influence of the world-stage metaphor can be seen, I believe, not only in Swift's imagery, but also in almost every aspect of his dramatic technique; and the influence of the world view of which it is one of the most important expressions dominates the thought of the poems that we are about to consider.

It has often been remarked that in all his thinking Swift was inclined to look to the past. As both Ricardo Quintana²⁷ and Phillip

Harth point out, for instance, in the religious satire of A Tale of a Tub, Swift was (in Harth's words) "flogging many a dead horse."²⁸ In his attack on the stage, he was making his contribution to Jeremy Collier's campaign (if indeed that is what he intended to do) more than ten years after the publication of A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage, long after the climax of the battle. If we are right in asserting that he was profoundly influenced by the metaphor of the world as a stage, in this too he was old-fashioned, according to Thomas B. Stroup's contention that before the middle of the seventeenth century the concept was already in decline.²⁹ These examples of his tendency to lag behind the thought of his time are perhaps significant indications of the generally conservative temper of his thinking.

In his religious beliefs, as Harth has so compellingly shown, Swift was orthodox. In the main stream of Christian tradition, he resisted the inroads of the deists on the one hand, with their denial of the need for revelation in religion, and of the fideists on the other, with their faith in revelation alone. In contrast with both deist and fideist, who agreed at least in the belief that "reason and supernatural religion were incompatible," the main-stream Christian held the view that "reason and revelation together provide the grounds of religion." Indeed, this view, "As formulated in the thirteenth century by St. Thomas Aquinas" represents "the official position of his church. As reformulated at the end of the sixteenth century by Richard Hooker it became the grounds of religion" of a great part of the Anglican church.³⁰

If Swift was orthodox (and therefore a traditionalist) in his religious beliefs, and conservative in most of the rest of his thinking, it is natural that many of the attitudes he expresses in the poetry reflect the

world view of the early seventeenth century and that he often thinks in terms of the great metaphors through which that world view, in the ascendant since the early middle ages, had most frequently been made intelligible.

All the metaphors with which we are concerned originated centuries before the advent of Christianity. The idea of the Great Chain of Being began, as E.M.W. Tillyard tells us, "with Plato's Timaeus, was developed by Aristotle, was adapted by the Alexandrian Jews ..., was spread by the Neo-Platonists, and from the Middle Ages till the eighteenth century was one of those accepted commonplaces, more often hinted at or taken for granted than set forth." It is possible that the idea is older still, for later "allegorisers", as Tillyard points out, "interpreted the golden chain let down by Zeus from Heaven in Homer as this chain of being."³¹ The idea of the world as a stage, Stroup tells us, "goes back at least as far as Democritus." By Shakespeare's time, the figure that had come down "from the laughing philosopher and the classical satirists on the one side and the Platonists and Christian Fathers on the other to the Renaissance humanists and English schoolmasters" had "through wide and varied usage ... achieved aphoristic place in the language of the learned."³² And the concept of the microcosm, early associated with the world-stage imagery, was first formulated by Pythagoras.³³ In the early middle ages, with the great synthesis of pagan learning and early Christianity, all these metaphors made their way into the main stream of Christian tradition.

It is a measure of their power to grip the imagination that they are still in general use, a living part of the language long after the decline of the world view that once informed them.³⁴ Furthermore, detailed knowledge of the elements that originally made them up is still a familiar

part of our intellectual heritage. Everyone knows, for example, that in its Christianised form, the figure of the Great Chain of Being was, first, a means of expressing what Lovejoy calls "the principle of plenitude." The essence of the infinite Creator is to create infinitely, to fill the universe with a great hierarchy of beings. There can be no gaps in the chain, each part of which, though unique, partakes of the nature of the creation immediately above and below it. It is God's love that impels Him to create. Further, God's love pervades the chain and is the force that binds it together. But God is also self-sufficient, the Idea of Good itself. Thus though the goodness of God impels Him to create, and in the order of His creation every creature has its assigned place which it is its function to fill, the creature is also impelled perpetually to aspire so that it may be reunited with God as the Idea of the Good.

The great medieval synthesist St. Thomas Aquinas, the father of so much in the orthodox traditional concept of Christianity, was also one of the most influential transmitters and transmuters of the ancient metaphor. Basil Willey's account of Thomism provides a useful statement of those aspects of the metaphor that are most important in our consideration of Swift:

St. Thomas sees the universe as a hierarchy of creatures ordered to the attainment of perfection in their several kinds. All things proceed from God; and God is not only the ground of their being but also the Supreme Good with which all seek to be reunited. God created the world that he might communicate himself more fully; as First Mover . . . he impels all creatures to desire him. . . . God not only created, but continuously sustains the world, and governs it. . . . To all creatures he has given a 'nature' or 'form' in virtue of which they are necessitated both to be what they are, and to seek that which is proper to them. Thus earth, and heavy bodies, tend downwards; fire and light bodies upwards. All motion is a striving to actualise what is as yet only potential. Though binding Nature thus fast in fate, God has in a sense left free the human will. The formal principle of man as such is the rational Soul; and virtue,

for man, is therefore action conformable to reason. Whereas Nature cannot but conform to unalterable law, man, through his will, is determined to 'good', yet is capable, since the Fall, of making erroneous choices both of ends and means. He is, as it were, less perfect than the other creatures in virtue of the very gift of reason which makes him their superior. Further, his 'form' being his rational soul, he is ordered to the attainment of no limited perfection like the other creatures. Nothing short of the Supreme Good, God Himself, can be his end.³⁵

Thus Aquinas reconciles the essential conflict between the two Platonic concepts of God, the Idea of the Good and the Idea of Goodness, in his vision of the divinely ordered universe. As Lovejoy points out, in Christian teaching, the one concept was bound to give way to the other:

It was the Idea of the Good, not the conception of a self-transcending and generative Goodness, that determined the ethical teaching of the Church (at least in its counsels of perfection) and shaped the assumptions concerning man's chief end which dominated European thought down to the Renaissance, and in orthodox theology, Protestant as well as Catholic, beyond it. The 'way up' alone was the direction in which man was to look for the good, even though the God who had from all eternity perfectly possessed the good which is the object of man's quest was held to have found, so to say, his chief good in the 'way down'.³⁶

We shall find that Swift, the orthodox Christian, in his application of the ideas implicit in the Great Chain of Being, and in his use of the figure itself, is interested principally in the duty of men and women to accept "the 'form' in virtue of which they are necessitated both to be what they are, and to seek that which is proper to them," and to remember that "the formal principle of man as such is the rational Soul, and virtue, for man, is therefore action conformable to reason." The notion underlies, for example, his relentless scolding of the women who will not use their minds, and is associated with his frequent coupling of reasonableness (or "good sense") and virtue as the qualities upon which a man's admiration of a woman should be founded.³⁷ In other examples,

imaginatively aware perhaps (unlike some of his contemporaries) that however wrongly man chooses, he is hardly capable of destroying God's order, or of actually leaving his own place in it,³⁸ Swift dwells chiefly on man's impiety in not willingly conforming to it. Furthermore, he emphasises man's sin in elevating or debasing his fellows as much as his sin in himself behaving as if he were greater or less than man.

Although it was possible to accept the Chain of Being as a statement of the structure of the creation without believing in Providence, to the orthodox Christian the idea of God's continued presence in the order is essential. God did not merely create the hierarchy and its laws and leave them to operate mechanically. Not only is the hierarchy pervaded and held together by God's love; as director and judge of the affairs of men, God is perpetually at work in it. Belief in God's continual and active participation in human affairs found even fuller expression for the medieval and post-medieval Christian in the metaphor of the world as a stage, and in the image developed from the synthesis of this metaphor with the notion of man as a microcosm, the image of the stage as in its turn a microcosm of the world.

The world-stage was conceived, even in pre-Christian times,³⁹ as a testing ground for man. God is the author of the drama of human life, and also the director. Author-like, He creates roles, and director-like He assigns these roles to individuals and concerns Himself in the performance. As Providence, He directs the action, guiding events to conclusions that the actors often have no means of understanding or knowing beforehand. His purpose as director of the play is twofold. Each man is both an actor and a spectator. As an actor, he is being tested by God, Who judges him accordingly to the way he plays his part. As a spectator, he witnesses the

testing of others, and seeing the rewards and punishments meted out by God for the faithful and faulty playing out of the assigned roles, he has the chance to learn and to take warning himself from the example of others. Man's duty to perform his assigned part on the stage of the world, to the best of his ability, is identical with his duty to be ever mindful of his place in the great Chain of Being. Both metaphors are expressions of the relationship of men with their creator, which requires them "both to be what they are and to seek that which is proper to them."

Attendant upon the concept of the total and comprehensive order of the universe and the interrelationship of all things was the concept of correspondences, another of the elements in the Elizabethan world picture described by Tillyard.⁴⁰ We may describe this concept briefly because it is relevant to the present study only in its bearing upon the important figures that remain to be discussed. The principle of the doctrine of correspondences is that every creature in each of the hierarchies of which the great hierarchy is composed has its equivalent in rank in each of the other hierarchies. For example, the sun in the heavens, fire among the elements, the diamond among gems, the lion among beasts, the ruler in the state, the will in man, all correspond to one another as primates in their classes of creation, and to God in the whole universe.

The last of the elements in the world picture we are considering is the concept of microcosm and macrocosm. The divinely ordered universe, figured forth in the pictures of the great stage and the vertically operating hierarchy of the Chain of Being, could also be imagined three-dimensionally as a series of spheres one within another. Man himself is a microcosm or little world. His body is a tiny equivalent of the universe itself, and its parts and faculties correspond to equivalents in both the

great hierarchy and the lesser hierarchies. More important to our present study, the mind of a man is the little arena in which the conflict between the forces of good and evil are acted out as they are acted out in the world outside him. Herein is an essential link with the concept of the world as a stage. The testing or trial of a man has the macrocosm as its setting, but the issue of the test is ultimately determined by the psychomachia, the drama of the soul that takes place in the microcosm, his mind. But man himself is not the only microcosm of the world as a stage. The theatre too is a little world, in which the playwright is the creator, and in which the conflicts enacted correspond to and are representative of the conflicts between good and evil in the outer world, the macrocosm that is God's stage.

In medieval times, three of the elements from this complex of figures come together in a particularly significant context. In the morality plays,⁴¹ all of which were concerned at some level with man's struggle for salvation, the figure of the world as a stage, and the figures of both man and the stage as microcosms of that world unite. The clearest example in English literature is the earliest of the surviving morality plays, The Castle of Perseverance.⁴² A sketch of the stage on which this play was performed has also survived. The stage consisted of a circular, world-like arena enclosed by a ditch. At its centre was the castle, the seat of the Seven Moral Virtues, and set about it were five "skafolds" or towers, the seats of God, the World, the Flesh, the Devil, and the Seven Deadly Sins. From these details, and from the action, it is clear that the setting of the first part of the play is the mind of man the microcosm. In it the protagonist, Mankind, attended by his good and bad angels, represents the "self" of man. We see him beset by the forces of evil, rescued,

lost again, and when the dart of Death has pierced him, repentant. In the later part of the play, after his death, the setting no longer represents his mind in which the struggle has taken place. Now his soul is borne off to Hell (the scaffold of the Devil), and his case is argued before God by the prosecuting Truth and Righteousness and the defending Mercy and Peace. His trial is the culmination of the testing that he has undergone in his life. At last he is led to the throne of God to be judged, and pardoned.

These, then, are the traditional figurative representations of the orthodox Christian theology that Swift upheld against what in terms of it were the heresies of his own day. The concepts and the figures representing them are so closely interrelated that it is hard to imagine how an orthodox Christian could keep the great theatrical metaphors out of his thinking even if he wanted to do so. Although, unlike many of his Christian dramatist and other contemporaries, Swift was apparently blind to the fact that the religious function of the drama was still a living reality in the theatre of his own day, he shows in his poetry that it was a living if not overtly proclaimed reality to him.

In the chapters that follow, I shall examine first his thoughts upon the human role in the divinely ordered universe, by considering what he writes of the behaviour and treatment of women. Next I shall examine the revelation of Swift's own position in terms of his roles upon the stage of the world, considering especially the roles that he apparently sees as already ordained for him in the divinely directed drama, and his willing assumption of these roles in his relations with women. Finally, I shall examine the play-like elements in his presentation of himself and the women and men of whom he writes. And throughout, I shall point out

the web of interlocking images and allusions that remind us constantly of the traditional figures through which the beliefs of orthodox Christians had for so long been expressed.

Notes on Introduction

¹The enigmatic quality of Swift's poetry has impressed many critics. For a collection of "admission[s] of critical inadequacy, or bafflement," see Maurice Johnson, "Swift's Poetry Reconsidered," in English Writers of the Eighteenth Century, ed. John H. Middendorf (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 239.

²The dramatic monologues of one of Swift's successors demonstrate the point. As a dramatisation, Browning's "My Last Duchess" is more successful than his "Bishop Blougram's Apology." In following the Bishop's lengthy argument, our attention is diverted for too long from action to idea.

³The Battle of the Books is the only non-poetic work of Swift (apart, of course, from Polite Conversation) that can be considered playlike in its entirety, and it also has a plot and is short.

⁴The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 2nd. ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 580-583. In subsequent notes I shall use the abbreviation "Williams" to refer to this edition, the only one I have used. Because the pagination is continuous from volume to volume, I shall give only page numbers and make no reference to volume numbers in my notes. After quotations, I shall give line references only.

⁵Paul Fussell, The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 7.

⁶"We are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance." Samuel Johnson, "Life of Milton," in Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1967).

⁷As few women at this time took part in public or political life, if we choose to write almost exclusively of the poems about women, we confine ourselves automatically to poems about personal relationships.

⁸The attitude to explicit satire has undergone no such dichotomy. There are no obvious interruptions in the tradition of attacking false assumptions by means of wit, and the assertion of the true by implication. At the present stage of our discussion we are concerned with the place of humour in the direct assertion of values.

⁹Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), p. 23.

¹⁰The "reasonableness" of such theologians as John Toland blinded both them and their followers to the fact that their reasoning was removing most of the grounds for believing in the existence of God at all.

¹¹The humourlessness was not universal, of course. Byron and Browning immediately come to mind as notable exceptions.

¹²In "Toland's Invitation to Dismal," for example, and in parts of "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift."

¹³Lives of the English Poets, III, 65-66.

¹⁴Of the view of Swift's "gross[ness]" as nothing but a "fault" and the indulgence of an ill-considered whim we shall have more to say in Chapter II.

¹⁵Unfortunately for Swift, however, his earliest biographers were afflicted by the new earnestness. It was his further misfortune that their way of thinking prevailed for so long and that some of the opinions they recorded were accepted unchallenged for almost two hundred years. Here is a particularly revealing extract from Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, by John Boyle, Fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery, the 2nd edition (London: A. Miller, 1752), p. 41:

But what shall be said for his love of trifles, and his want of delicacy and decorum? Errors [that] . . . are without a parallel. I hope they will ever remain so. The first of them arose merely from his love of flattery . . . : the second, proceeded from the misanthropy of his disposition, which induced him peevishly to debase mankind, and even to ridicule human nature itself.

Although Patrick Delany defended Swift on many counts in his Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks (London: W. Reeve and A. Linde, 1754), he expressed even more strongly and repeatedly than Orrery his disapproval of "that detestable maxim, 'vive la bagatelle!'" (pp. 120-121). See also pp. 82-83 and pp. 142-143). At last, indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that the eventual deterioration of Swift's mind was a "divine chastisement upon him," the gradual taking away of "those talents, which being bestowed for the noblest purposes, were too often employed, or, to speak more properly, abused, to the meanest" (pp. 150-151).

¹⁶Alexander Pope, Imitations of Horace with An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot and The Epilogue to the Satires, ed. John Butt, 2nd ed., corrected, The Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope, Vol. 4 (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 245-246.

¹⁷The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-1965), II, 400. In subsequent notes this work will be referred to as "Correspondence".

¹⁸Correspondence, II, 415-416. We are reminded of Erasmus's remark that "literary jests may have serious implications, and . . . a reader with a keen nose may get more from a skilful trifle than from a solemn and stately argument" (In Praise of Folly, trans. Leonard F. Dean, New York, 1952, p. 38). This passage is quoted by Jae Num Lee in Swift and Scatological Satire (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971).

¹⁹The underlining is mine.

²⁰Correspondence, III, 278.

²¹The tradition of "Christianising" Ovid was, of course, an old one. According to Eric Rothstein, Swift "inverts" it in this poem, with mock-heroic effect. See "Jonathan Swift as Jupiter: 'Baucis and Philemon,'" in The Augustan Milieu: Essays Presented to Louis A. Landa, ed. Henry Knight Miller, Eric Rothstein and G.S. Rousseau (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 225-231.

²²Rothstein notes that "Saints" is "a name that would remind Englishmen either of Puritan fanatics or of Catholic impostors" (p. 214).

²³Philemon is "a poor old honest Yeman," for example.

²⁴Aspects of Swift's use of dramatic method have been discussed by a number of critics. See, for example D.J. Dooley, "Image and Point of View in Swift," Papers in Language and Literature, 6 (1970), 125-135; C.J. Horne, "'From a Fable form a Truth': A Consideration of the Fable in Swift's Poetry," in Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. R.F. Brissenden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 196-197; Ronald Paulson, "Swift, Stella and Permanence," ELH, 27 (1960), 313-314; George Mayhew, "Some Dramatizations of Swift's Polite Conversation (1738)," PQ, 44 (1965), 51-72; Frederik N. Smith, "Dramatic Elements in Swift's Journal to Stella," Eighteenth Century Studies, 1, 1968, 332-351; James L. Tyne, S.J., "Vanessa and the Houyhnhnms: A Reading of 'Cadenus and Vanessa,'" SEL, 2 (1971), 519.

²⁵The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936-68). In subsequent notes this work will be referred to as "Davis".

²⁶We have already cited his comment on The Beggar's Opera (1728). See page 7 above. For a brief account of evidence of his attitude to the contemporary theatre, see Appendix.

²⁷Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 68.

²⁸Phillip Harth, Swift and Anglican Rationalism (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 153.

²⁹Thomas B. Stroup, Microcosmos (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), *passim*.

³⁰See Harth, pp. 21-23.

³¹E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943), p. 26. For a full account of "The Genesis of the Idea," see Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), Chapter II.

³²Stroup, pp. 13-14. For a detailed account of the early history of the figure, see the chapter from which these quotations are taken, and also Jean Jacquot, "'Le Théâtre du Monde de Shakespeare à Caldéron,'" Revue de Littérature Comparée XXXI (Juillet-Septembre, 1957), 341-72, to which Stroup refers us.

³³Stroup, p. 44.

³⁴In Swift's day, no doubt, it was already foolish to assume that a man was an orthodox Christian simply because he used the imagery derived from orthodox Christianity. We are concerned, rather, with the converse of the proposition. As an orthodox Christian, Swift turned with particular ease to the traditional images, for they still meant something to him. And as Harth suggests, we can "recognize and assess" the author's originality in "putting conventional material to new uses" only when we are "aware of that complex of ideas, assumptions, and attitudes which [he] owes to his predecessors and contemporaries" (p. 1).

³⁵Willey, pp. 13-14.

³⁶Lovejoy, p. 84.

³⁷For an interesting discussion of Swift's notion of the admirable in women, and of the relationship of reason, passion, and love, see Peter Ohlin, "'Cadenus and Vanessa': Reason and Passion," SEL, 4 (1964), 485-496. Ohlin concludes: "In the end, Swift's concept of love is simply that Christian selfless love which is a reflection of the divine love of God for mankind" (496).

³⁸See Lovejoy, pp. 202-203.

³⁹See Stroup's references to the appearance of the notion in Epicurus, Plato and Plotinus, for example (pp. 9-11).

⁴⁰Tillyard, chapters 6 and 7.

⁴¹See also Stroup's comments upon the Mystery plays (pp. 35-36).

⁴²Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, ed. Joseph Quincey Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), pp. 265-287.

II THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN

CHAPTER 1 INADEQUACIES

In his attitude to women as in other matters, Swift appears to have been remarkably consistent. Turning straight from the earliest poem in which he writes of women, "Verses wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book" (1698)¹ to the latest, "Epistle to a Lady" (1733),² we find the same pre-occupation: the trivial-mindedness of women who are capable of putting their brains to better use. Here is one manifestation of Swift's concern for the failure of men and women to remember the place they occupy in the divinely created and maintained order of the universe. Man has no more business to behave as if he were sub-human than he has to aspire to god-like status. His task is to use his distinguishing attributes of reason and the power of choice to the best of his ability, and thus to co-operate with his maker. In a passage near the beginning of "Cadenus and Vanessa," Swift describes the situation that arises when women fail to live up to their responsibilities as human beings. In the words of Counsel for the Shepherds, whom the Nymphs have charged with responsibility for the deterioration of love and marriage, women have ceased to feel the "fire celestial, chaste, refin'd/ Conceiv'd and kindled in the mind"³ (29-30). Instead, they "only know the gross Desire" (35) and, guided by caprice and folly, become infatuated with

A Dog, a Parrot, or an Ape,
Or some worse Brute in human Shape,
.....
The few soft Moments they can spare,
From Visits to receive and pay,

From Scandal, Politicks, and Play,
 From Fans and Flounces, and Brocades,
 From Equipage and Park-Parades,
 From all the thousand Female Toys,
 From every Trifle that employs
 The out or inside of their Heads,
 Between their Toylets and their Beds. (39-50)

Women ought to fix their affections on men, their own kind, not on brutes, and not on so-called men who have sunk below their places in the scale of being, Counsel implies. But clearly, his words suggest, right order has been disrupted; sound values have been lost, and the vacuum they have left has been filled with a host of trivialities. Throughout the poems, Swift comes back again and again to the worthlessness of such preoccupations in themselves, and to the gravity of the disorder their existence implies, however amusingly they are presented.

The dress with which women are preoccupied is sometimes ludicrous in itself: the hoop, for example, invites ridicule. In "The Progress of Marriage," Swift pictures the ill-matched Dean and his wife in her coach: "Her Hoop is hoist above his Nose,/ His odious Gown would soil her Cloaths." (79-80) But this picture suggests not only the ridiculousness of the hoop but also the failure of both the lady and her husband to remember their places in the scale of being and to treat each other as fellow human beings. She despises her meek and doting husband, and cares more about the appearance of her clothes than about the comfort of a fellow mortal. The comical hoop is the objective correlative of the lady's lack of a proper sense of proportion.⁴

Not all fashions are foolish, but to Swift disproportionate concern about dress is generally worse than foolish.⁵ In "Cadenus and Vanessa," the "glitt'ring Dames" who visit Vanessa "early, out of pure Good-will,/ To see the Girl in Deshabille" (364-367) are malicious and immodest as well as empty-headed as they "raily" her dress:

That Gown was made for Old Queen Bess,
 Dear Madam, Let me set your Head:
 Don't you intend to put on Red?
 A Pettycoat without a Hoop!
 Sure, you are not asham'd to stoop;
 With handsome Garters at your Knees,
 No matter what a Fellow sees. (397-403)

"Discoursing with important Face,/ On Ribbons, Fans, and Gloves and Lace," showing Vanessa "Patterns just from India brought," and "gravely" asking her opinion, "Whether the Red or Green were best,/ And what they cost?", they have already shown their incongruously serious attitude to dress.⁶ To the protagonist of "The Journal of a Modern Lady," too, the inspection of the merchants' silks and laces is "Business of Importance" (90).⁷ Even Baucis is led astray. The transformation of her humble apparel into "Good Pinners edg'd with Colberteene" and "Black Sattin, Flounc'd with Lace" goes immediately to her head and she becomes proud and pretentious: "Plain Goody would no longer down,/ 'Twas Madam, in her Grogram Gown." (139-144)

Swift's dress-obsessed woman sacrifices other concerns and duties to her obsession. The woman of Ireland, in refusing to resist the fashions of London and to set their own fashions by weaving home-produced wool, demonstrated their inability to see beyond their own immediate concerns or their selfish unwillingness to act upon what they saw and to do their part to succour the Irish economy. In "An Excellent New Song on a Seditious Pamphlet . . . Written in the Year 1720,"⁸ Swift's Irish shopkeepers complain:

Our Wives they grow sullen
 At wearing of Woollen,
 And all we poor Shopkeepers must our Horns pull in.
 Then we'll buy English Silks, for our Wives and our Daughters,
 In Spight of his Deanship and Journeyman Waters. (14-18)

Lady Acheson uses the thoughts of dress and cards as screens by which she can shut out thoughts of mortality. In "To Janus on New Year's Day," Swift has her exclaim:

By the D--n though gravely told,
 New Years help to make me old;
 Yet I find, a New-Years Lace
 Burnishes an old Year's Face.
 Give me Velvet and Quadrille
 I'll have Youth and Beauty still. (25-30)

In "The Revolution at Market-Hill," jeu d'esprit though it is, seriousness underlies Swift's warning to Lady Acheson that her obsession with dress makes her vulnerable. The poem was written when Swift was thinking of building a house near the Achesons'. He imagines himself and another neighbour, Henry Leslie, rising up in rebellion against Sir Arthur, the liege-lord to whom they must pay homage and rent. Lady Anne will defend "the Fort" with spirit, but no matter how formidable she is she will be defeated, by means of a stratagem. The "revolutionaries" will have their accomplice, her maid, put before her a pair of embroidered high-heeled shoes, "So well contriv'd her Toes to pinch,/ She'll not have Pow'r to stir an Inch" -- or to prevent Hannah from opening the gate to the besiegers. In the tone of the analogy with which Swift closes the episode, the underlying gravity comes to the surface:

Sly Hunters thus, in Borneo's Isle,
 To catch a Monkey by a Wile;
 The mimick Animal amuse;
 They place before him Gloves and Shoes;
 Which when the Brute puts awkward on,
 All his Agility is gone;
 In vain to frisk or climb he tries;
 The Huntsmen seize the grinning Prize. (75-82)

No woman acting her part as it should be acted would have so much in common with "a Mimick Animal," a "Brute," a "grinning Prize," nor would she be so vulnerable. The huntsmen, sly, wily, ready to seize the prey that is so clearly no match for them, are sinister figures, and put us in mind of more dangerous adversaries than the Dean and his friends.

Swift often associates the passion for clothes with time wasting.

Nothing so clearly suggests the serious spiritual disorder of the barren-minded woman as the timing of her day's activities. Her whole day is idle, devoted entirely to time-wasting, yet all day long, from rising to retiring, she is late. For the bride in "The Progress of Marriage," the daily round of board and bed begins several hours later than her husband's and remains out of step with it at every point all day and every day. Her "weighty Morning Business" is to "ramble . . . to the Shops/ To cheapen Tea, and Talk with Fops," or to call "a Councel of her Maids/ And tradesmen, to compare Brocades" (51-54). The Modern Lady, too, spends with "the Folks with Silks and Lace" much of the interval between awakening at noon ("Some Authors say not quite so soon") and dressing for dinner, which is clearly a formidable task:

This Business of Importance o'er,
And Madam almost dress'd by Four;
The Footman in his usual Phrase,
Comes up with, "Madam, Dinner stays;
She answers in her usual Style,
'The Cook must keep it back a while;
'I never can have Time to Dress,
'No Woman breathing takes up less;
'I'm hurry'd so, it makes me sick,
'I wish the Dinner at Old Nick." (90-99)

The repetition of "usual" emphasizes the fact that this disordered state is chronic. "The Lady's Dressing-Room," one of Swift's most masterly analyses of what is out of joint in the attitude of men and women to each other and to their place in the universe, opens with perhaps the strongest statement of all about the mortal woman, elevated by her admirers, and by her own vanity, to the status of goddess, who spends five precious hours each day merely in dressing:

Five Hours, (and who can do it less in?)
By haughty Celia spent in Dressing;
The Goddess from her Chamber issues,
Array'd in Lace, Brocades and Tissues. (1-4)

"And who can do it less in?" is simultaneously an ironic comment and a comparatively straightforward one. Celia spends too much time on dressing; but it is barely enough for what she is trying to do--to aspire beyond her human rank and make herself look like a goddess.

Apart from dress, the major preoccupation of Swift's trivial-minded women is "Play", and for many the love of cards is an addiction. After sitting up all night at quadrille, and losing, the Modern Lady forswears cards, but her protestations to her maid, whether they represent serious resolves or mere social poses, come to nothing:

"But, was it not confounded hard?
 "Well, if I ever touch a Card:
 "Four Mattadores, and lose Codill!
 "Depend upon't, I never will.
 "But run to Tom, and bid him fix
 "The Ladies here to Night by Six." (59-55)

She pawns her silver, at 100% interest; when she is dunned for the gambling debt incurred the previous night, she pays her creditor with "those ten Pistoles/ My Husband left to pay for Coals" (66-67). Other women try to recoup their gaming losses by speculations in the South Sea Company.⁹ But worse evils than financial disaster attend the addiction. Envy, hatred and malice accompany it, and honesty takes second place to it. In "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind," Swift describes the woman "Improving hourly in her Skill,/ To cheat and wrangle at Quadrille" (25-26). In "Death and Daphne," he has Daphne wondering whether even in the afterlife Chloe is "a Sharper still,/ As great as ever, at Quadrille?" (77-78). Cheating is so universal that none of the card-players is really disturbed by it. In "The Journal of a Modern Lady," the ladies accuse and counter-accuse one another, but

While thus they rail, and scold, and storm,
 It passes but for common Form;
 Most conscious that they all speak true,
 And give each other but their Due;

It never interrupts the Game,
Or makes 'em sensible of Shame. (270-275)

Part of the trouble is the absence of all proportion and order from the addiction-ridden life. To her passion the Modern Lady has sacrificed everything, from the family housekeeping money to her own moral credit. The addict's system of values becomes so distorted that even the most forcible reminder of mortality touches neither her mind nor her heart:

My female Friends, whose tender Hearts
Have better learn'd to act their Parts.
Receive the News in doleful Dumps,
"The Dean is dead, (and what is Trumps?)
"The Lord have Mercy on his Soul.
"(Ladies I'll venture for the Vole.)" (225-230)¹⁰

But this absence of proportion and order is itself symptomatic of a more basic disorder. If women remembered their fundamental duty as human beings "to be what they are and to seek that which is proper to them," that is, to behave in accordance with their "formal principle . . . the rational soul,"¹¹ they would be in harmony with the order of the Great Chain of Being, and their lives would reflect that order. It is a primary human duty to cultivate the mind, the uniquely human heritage. But card-playing drives out more serious matters, and so Lady Acheson's women visitors cannot understand why she attempts to study: "How could she sit the live-long Day," they ask, "Yet never ask us once to play?"¹² In "The Hardship put upon Ladies," Swift suggests that the obsession with card-playing has done more than merely distort woman's values--it has completely inverted them. He can make his point by simple antiphrastic irony:

Poor Ladies! though their Bus'ness be to play,
'Tis hard they must be busy Night and Day:
Why should they want the Privilege of Men,
And take some small Diversions now and then?
Had Women been the Makers of our Laws;
(And why they were not, I can see no Cause;)
The Men should slave at Cards from Morn to Night;
And Female Pleasures be to read and write.

The total trivial-mindedness of the card-and-dress-obsessed woman, then, is not a venial sin. It is the evidence that she is neglecting totally what should be her chief business in life, perhaps even denying her very reason for existence. It is no wonder that in the chaos of her life she seems to have so little control over the spending of time, for her purposes are not co-ordinated with the purposes of God. The Modern Lady's time has been out of joint from the moment of her awakening, when

 loit'ring o'er her Tea and Cream,
 She enters on her usual Theme;
 Her last Night's ill Success repeats,
 Calls Lady Spade a hundred Cheats;

 Through ev'ry Game pursues her Tale,
 Like Hunters o'er their Evening Ale. (70-79)

Ironically, it is only in the early hours of the morning when the card fever has reached its height that she shows any awareness of the value of time, and then it is a sadly disordered sense of value that she displays:

 The Time too precious now to waste,
 And Supper gobbled up in haste,
 Again a-fresh to Cards they run. (276-278)

At the card table, the obsessed lady

 Ever with some new Fancy struck,
 Tries twenty Charms to mend her Luck.
 "This Morning when the Parson came,
 "I said I should not win a Game.
 "This odious Chair how came I stuck in't,
 "I think I never had good Luck in't,
 "I'm so uneasy in my Stays,
 "Your Fan, a Moment, if you please.
 "Stand further Girl, or get you gone,
 "I always lose when you look on." (236-245)

Petulant and irrational, she is a self-made prisoner in a mesh of superstitions. Everything about her is at variance with her proper role. Not even attempting to be reasonable, she has no stability. Her physical discomfort at the card table reflects her deeper malaise. In the brief periods unfilled by cards, talk of dress, scandal-mongering and the rest

of her totally unproductive and actually harmful activities, she succumbs to hypochondria: when she wakes, she "of Head-ach, and the Spleen complains." In the interval between the departure of visitors and the arrival of the card-players, she is neurotically terrified by the thought that they may not come, and again is overcome by sickness:

Now all alone poor Madam sits,
In Vapours and Hysterick Fits:
.....
"Past Six, and not a living Soul!
"I might by this have won a Vole."
A dreadful Interval of Spleen!
How shall we pass the Time between?
"Here Betty, let me take my Drops,
"And feel my Pulse, I know it stops:
"This Head of mine, Lord, how it Swims!
"And such a Pain in all my Limbs!" (198-209)

The guests arrive, and, "Her Spleen and Fits recover'd quite,/ Our Madam can sit up all Night." (198-217) She may well have felt ill: her irregular hours, and her alternate loitering and rushing at meal times, would have been enough by themselves to upset her physical well-being. But the basic cause is deeper: spiritually and psychologically she is mortally sick.

In most of the manifestations of trivial-mindedness that Swift observes, it is difficult to distinguish between symptoms and causes. Excessive interest in dress, cards, and the rest of the "thousand female Toys" causes a woman to neglect her duty. But if her scheme of values were sound to begin with, her interest in trivia would never become excessive. The possession of a sound scheme of values, however, is the product of intellectual as well as moral influences. The trivial-minded woman is not entirely to blame for her wretched state. Although Swift does not exonerate her, he does recognise how severely she is handicapped by both lack of education and miseducation.¹³ Her mind is barren, because it has been left

uncultivated. Nothing useful has been planted, and only weeds flourish. Even if her intentions are good, she is ill-equipped for seeking virtue in the peculiarly human way, by "action conformable to reason."

The most obvious manifestation of her ignorance is her inability to spell, pronounce, and use words correctly. In "Verses wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-book," the implications are that the lady is, at least potentially, much superior to the coxcomb who writes in the table-book,¹⁴ but her spelling is no better: "Here in Beau-spelling (tru tel deth)/ There in her own (far an el breth)." (9-10) In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," Lady Acheson's "Neighbours who come here to dine,/ Admire to hear her speak so fine" (135-136), and the ladies comment later: "She's grown so nice, and so penurious,/ With Socratus and Epicurius" (143-144). Her prowess is the result of Swift's instruction:

Poor I, a Savage bred and born,
By you instructed ev'ry Morn,
Already have improv'd so well,
That I have almost learn't to spell. (131-134)

Women also betray, especially in their speech, a lack of mental discipline with which a better education might have provided them. Writing as Mrs. Harris (who, according to the fable of Swift's poem, has lost her carefully hoarded savings, her only dowry), the poet reproduces the loquacity of an ignorant if understandably agitated woman, pouring forth all the circumstances of the occasion, relevant and irrelevant.¹⁵ The tedious Mrs. Percival, in "The Journal," also enjoys total recall, and exhibits an ignorant woman's inability to select wisely from her recollections and adapt her conversation to her audience--"Female Pedant"¹⁶ though she is. She

Shews all her Secrets of House keeping,
For Candles, how she trucks her Dripping;
Was forc'd to send three Miles for Yest,

To brew her Ale, and raise her Paste:
 Tells ev'ry thing that you can think of,
 How she cur'd Charley of the Chincough;
 What gave her Brats and Pigs the Meazles,
 And how her Doves were kill'd by Weezles:
 How Jowler howl'd, and what a fright
 She had with Dreams the other Night. (85-96)

Mrs. Harris's speech is larded with expletives: she calls upon her Maker as freely and as inappropriately as Mistress Quickly:

Now you must know, because my Trunk has a very bad Lock,
 Therefore all the Money, I have, which, God knows, is a very small
 Stock,
 I keep in a Pocket ty'd about my Middle, next my Smock.
 So when I went to put up my Purse, as God would have it, my Smock
 was unript,
 And, instead of putting it into my Pocket, down it slipt:
 Then the Bell rung, and I went down to put my Lady to Bed,
 And, God knows, I thought my Money was as safe as my Maidenhead.
 (5-11)

It is important to realise that we are listening, in each of these effusions, not to Juliet's nurse or Mistress Quickly, but to Swift's representation of a gentlewoman.¹⁷ The "well-bred" women sound just as unsophisticated intellectually as the footman's wife accused of stealing Mrs. Harris's purse ("The Devil take me, said she, (blessing her self,) if I ever saw't!"), or as Lady Acheson's maid Hannah when she laments her master's plan to turn Hamilton's Bawn into a malthouse instead of barracks:

But Madam, I guest there wou'd never come Good,
 When I saw him so often with Darby and Wood.
 And now my Dream's out: For I was a-dream'd
 That I saw a huge Rat: O dear, how I scream'd
 After, me thought, I had lost my new Shoes;
 And Molly, she said, I should hear some ill News. (47-52)¹⁸

They sound almost as chaotic of thought and utterance as Mary the Cook-Maid¹⁹ who defends her master, Swift, against Sheridan, angry because Swift has called him a goose: "Which, and I am sure I have been his Servant four years since October,/ And he never call'd me worse than Sweet-heart drunk or sober." (13-14)

Women's lack of judgment, too, may be put down at least partly to their uneducated state and to their miserable intellectual poverty. Lacking knowledge and untrained in the use of reason, they rely on parrot-learning and stock responses. "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind" begins:

A Set of Phrases learn't by Rote;
 A Passion for a Scarlet-Coat;
 When at a Play to laugh, or cry,
 Yet cannot tell the Reason why:
 Never to hold her Tongue a Minute:
 While all she prates has nothing in it.
 Whole Hours can with a Coxcomb sit,
 And take his Nonsense all for Wit:

 Has ev'ry Repartee in Store,
 She spoke ten Thousand Times before.
 Can ready Compliments supply
 On all Occasions, cut and dry. (1-14)

We realise how totally inept the woman is when we are told that "Her Learning mounts²⁰ to read a Song" (9), and that "half the Words pronouncing wrong" (10), she cannot perform even this simple task properly. Even in the search upon which their future and livelihood may depend, women cannot make reasonable judgments: even in setting "nets for hearts" they work by parrot-learning, and their "formal arts," such as they are, do them no good.

Their looks are all by method set,
 When to be rude, and when coquette:
 Yet, wanting skill and pow'r to chuse,
 Their only pride is to refuse.²¹

A woman is obviously hindered from performing her human role as well as it could be performed if the best her neglected mind can produce in the way of thought processes is mechanical and non-rational. Her lack of judgment appears, too, in her tendency to assess men by appearances, in her susceptibility to the glamour of military uniform or the good looks and assurance of such characters as "Clever Tom Clinch going to be Hanged," to whom the maids' reaction is "lack-a-day! he's a proper Young Man" (8). In her own inadequacy, however, she seems actually afraid of the qualities

more worthy of admiration in men. In "To Lord Harley . . . on his Marriage," Swift marvels that "a spirit so inform'd" as Harley's has prospered in love,

For such is all the sex's flight,
They fly from learning, wit, and light:
They fly, and none can overtake
But some gay coxcomb, or a rake. (19-22)

The distrust a woman feels for the intellectually superior man is stronger even than her propensity to judge a man by his looks: Pheobus was beautiful: "Yet Daphne never slack'd her pace,/ For wit and learning spoil'd his face." (26-28)

Female ignorance, muddle-headedness and weakness of judgment are perhaps nowhere more clearly demonstrated by Swift than in the letter Phillis leaves for her father when she elopes with John the butler,²² a letter full of sentimental clichés, ludicrous inconsistencies, lame logic, and the expression of irrational and second-hand opinions:

To my much honor'd Father; These:
('Tis always done, Romances tell us,
When Daughters run away with Fellows)
Fill'd with the choicest common-places,
By others us'd in the like Cases.
That, long ago a Fortune-teller
Exactly said what now befell her,
And in a Glass had made her see
A serving-Man of low Degree:
It was her Fate; must be forgiven;
For Marriages are made in Heaven:
His Pardon begg'd, but to be plain,
She'd do't if 'twere to do again.
Thank God, 'twas neither Shame nor Sin,
For John was come of honest Kin:
Love never thinks of Rich and Poor,
She'd beg with John from Door to Door:
Forgive her, if it be a Crime,
She'll never do't another Time,
She ne'r before in all her Life
Once disobey'd him, Maid nor Wife.
One Argument she summ'd up all in,
The Thing was done and past recalling:
And therefore hop'd she would recover
His Favor, when his Passion's over.

She valued not what others thought her;
And was--His most obedient Daughter. (46-72)

But Phillis's inept performance owes more to her miseducation than to the lack of any education at all. Her letter shows that she does read, but that what she reads does nothing but encourage her moral weakness, giving her unsound beliefs and providing her with justifications for gratifying her passion. She derives her notions of what is "always done" from romances. The idea of eloping with another man, on her wedding morning, as well as some of "the choicest commonplaces" with which the letter is filled, probably come from the same source. With her preconceived notions, she has been fair game for the fortune-hunting John, seeing in him, no doubt, "the Squire of low Degree," rather than the "Serving-Man;" and guided by her borrowed belief that "Love never thinks of Rich and Poor," she thinks she will be content to "beg with John from Door to Door." She may not be really deceiving herself; but seeking, consciously or otherwise, a pretext for gratifying her inclinations for John and her desire to be the heroine of a romantic drama, she finds a precedent in the fiction with which her head has been filled--a precedent, furthermore, that makes her conduct seem "respectable" because in terms of the meretricious but high-falutin' sentiments of romantic fiction, it is "noble". The fine-sounding conventions of romantic love appeal all the more strongly because they absolve her of responsibility: "It was her fate" to elope with John; in fact, "long ago a Fortune-teller/ Exactly said what now befell her." From his fictions we gather that Swift would not allow his female "pupils" any frivolous reading matter. Vanessa says she dare not read romances.²³ "No book for delight," laments Lady Acheson, "Must come in my Sight."²⁴ Perhaps Swift thought that women could not spare any time from their studies. Because they had so far to go to catch up with men, "la

Bagatelle" was a luxury they could not afford. But perhaps his main object was to save them from exposure to the miseducating influences that in "The Progress of Love" he shows to be so harmful.

The perverting influence of bad early training is doubly harmful in that the false values implanted in youth actually impede the acquisition of better values when the opportunity for re-education comes. Swift puts into Lady Acheson's mouth an account of her own history and plight:

Follies, from my Youth instill'd
Have my Soul entirely fill'd:
In my Head and Heart they center;
Nor will let your Lessons enter.
Bred a Fondling, and an Heiress;
Drest like any Lady May'ress;
Cocker'd by the Servants round,
Was too good to touch the Ground:
Thought the Life of ev'ry Lady
Shou'd be one continu'd Play-Day:
Balls, and Masquerades, and Shows,
Visits, Plays, and Powder'd Beaux. (31-42)²⁵

Admittedly, Lady Acheson is rationalising: she has just displayed her readiness to excuse herself and to avoid the struggle to improve:

But it was decreed by Fate- - -;
Mr. Dean, You come too late:
Well I know, you can discern,
I am now too old to learn. (27-30)

But whatever Swift's view of her attitude, he has put into her mouth the statement of a problem he recognises.

His view that it is education that makes or mars the human being is perhaps most clearly indicated in his imagery. Vanessa's mind, he implies, is only the soil; her gifts have been implanted there--and he does not refer only to her natural intelligence. Pallas

sows within her tender Mind
Seeds long unknown to Womankind,
For manly Bosoms chiefly fit,
The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgment, Wit.

Vanessa, claiming "that Reason was her Guide in Love," tells her tutor

Cadenus that "What he had planted, now was grown." The emotions, too, are implanted. Venus also planted seeds which have grown and which Cupid hopes will "improve/ By Time, and ripen into Love."²⁶ In this case, Swift's image emphasises the self-evident fact that human beings are not responsible for the existence of their emotions. Our feelings are given to us. The responsibility for what we do with them is ours, but it does not come until later. If our beginnings, mental and emotional, are not within our control, even in their moral inadequacy, Swift implies, women are victims to the extent that they have been misled by miseducation.

But he does not absolve them completely, because in most cases it is by a sin they can recognise that they put themselves into the dangers to which they are so vulnerable: they neglect the admonitions of which no one living in a Christian country could be ignorant, however sketchy her formal education and however strong the miseducating forces to which she was subjected. It is by succumbing to vanity, he suggests, that girls run into the dangers of the fashionable heresy of deism. It is in order "To pass for Wits before a Rake" that they "try to learn polite Behaviour,/ By reading Books against their Saviour"²⁷--such books as "Wolston's Tracts, the twelfth Edition."²⁸ But their poor education has not equipped them for entering such a dangerous arena. Indeed, as far as the writings of the deists are concerned, they might be better off completely ignorant. Barely literate, they are easy victims: "Those Maids of Honour (who can read)/ Are taught to use them for their Creed."²⁹ Similarly, Swift does not absolve Phillis. If she had not been determined at all costs to follow "the devices and desires" of her own heart, she would probably not have been so quick to learn her dubious lesson from romances. A better education would have enabled her to write a more competent letter,

perhaps; whether it would have affected her conduct is another matter. The sardonic tone of the whole poem, and the denouement of the fable, leave us in no doubt about Swift's judgment of her. Sometimes he is more explicit. In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," he shows that the ignorance of Lady Acheson's friends is to some extent wilful:

How enviously the Ladies look,
When they surprize me at my Book!
And, sure as they're alive, at Night;
As soon as gone, will show their Spight. (137-140)

Their envy shows their awareness that it is good to be educated (although they may not understand why it is good); their malice shows that they are wilfully rejecting the desirable state, that they are refusing to accept their proper roles as rational beings. Wilful rejection of what opportunities they do have for self-improvement characterises Vanessa's companions, too. Venus, with Pallas's assistance, has created, by education, a near-perfect woman, worthy to make men admire and women emulate her. In failing to admire and to emulate, both sexes are actually culpable, as Swift clearly indicates by the use of "Guilt", and only a little less clearly by the use of "Spite":

For great Examples are but vain,
Where Ignorance begets Disdain.
Both Sexes, arm'd with Guilt and Spite,
Against Vanessa's Pow'r unite;
To copy her, few Nymphs aspir'd;
Her Virtues fewer Swains admir'd: (436-441)

Yet even here Swift suggests the inadequacy as well as the guilt of the wrong-headed and wrong-hearted; "So Stars beyond a certain Height/ Give Mortals neither Heat nor Light." (442-443) He is flattering Vanessa, no doubt, and no doubt irony is present, too. Vanessa is as mortal as her non-admirers. Belonging to the same order of creation she is close enough to them, and they ought not to be impervious to her influence. The fact remains that her virtues are too far beyond them to help them. Vanessa,

for her part, has remained impervious to their sneers and blandishments. But only the exceptionally gifted woman is capable of withstanding so completely the pressures put upon her by other women and men. The corrupted are the greatest corrupters, and the strongest forces of miseducation that beset a woman are the attitudes of the men and women who will neither recognise nor fulfil their roles as human beings, fallible but potentially rational, neither gods nor beasts.

In response to the pressures of corrupt custom, corrupt woman resorts to affectation. Obviously it is difficult or impossible for a woman to give much thought to what she is and ought to be if her mind is taken up with pretending to be what she is not, and it is significant that Swift hardly ever treats female affectation as merely silly. Even in the high-spirited comedy of "Mrs. Harris's Petition," he implies that, at best, affectation is inappropriate: the unfortunate lady, whose dowryless state is disastrous in view of her economic dependence, weakens her petition for redress after the loss of her savings when she claims: "'Tis not that I value the Money three Skips of a Louse;/ But the Thing I stand upon, is the Credit of the House" (38-39). The poet's impatience with the false modesty of the Modern Lady explodes as he describes her playing hostess. Her conventional disparagement of the fare she offers is "Dinner-Cant", "this paultry Stuff" with which "She sits tormenting every Guest" (109-110). Such affectation is unworthy. It is also dishonest.

The affected woman's dishonesty takes graver forms. Affectation goes hand in hand with dissimulation. The lady does as she pleases, and either imputes her actions to virtue or denies that they give her pleasure. Lady Jane goes to "the Bath":

Here, all Diversions of the Place
Are proper in my Lady's Case

With which she patiently complies,
Merely because her Friends advise. (131-134)³⁰

The diversions are not innocent: they range from her wasting "his Money and her Time," to "seek[ing] an Heir" in the cross-bath, where, Swift implies, she does not rely merely on the medicinal properties of the water. As their irresponsible marriage breaks down, John and Phillis turn pimp and prostitute; with heavy irony, Swift tells us that Phillis "broke her marriage Vows/ In Kindness to maintain her Spouse." (89-90)³¹ Ironically echoing the Modern Lady's words, he tells us that she sits up all night at cards "though sore against her Will" (40). Similarly, he echoes Lady Jane, returning home at five in the morning, with a commotion that wakes her luckless husband:

The Masquerade began at two,
She stole away with much ado,
And shall be chid this afternoon
For leaving company so soon;
She'll say, and she may truly say't,
She can't abide to stay out late (91-98)³²

When her husband dies as the result of the life she has led him, "The Widow goes through all her Forms;/ New Lovers now will come in Swarms" (157-158). It is this final hypocrisy, perhaps, as well as her treatment of her husband, that prompts the violently angry outburst with which Swift concludes the poem:

Oh, may I see her soon dispensing
Her Favors to some broken Ensign
Him let her Marry for his Face,
And only Coat of tarnish't Lace;
To turn her Naked out of Doors,
And spend her Joynture on his Whores:
But for a parting Present leave her
A rooted Pox to last for ever. (159-166)

The most harmful and dishonest form of female affectation, the form that constitutes the gravest deviation from the proper performance of the female role, is coquetry, overt and disguised. In a passage from "The

Furniture of a Woman's Mind," serious beneath its humour, we see all the ingredients of coquetry: the calculation, the hypocrisy, the lack of love shown in the woman's deliberate manipulation of the man's feelings, and her cold-blooded exertion of her power over him. Significantly, the pretence of ill-health and weakness is her weapon. Like Horner in Wycherley's The Country Wife, in spirit she has actually become the inadequate creature she is pretending to be. "If chance a Mouse creeps in her Sight," she

Can finely counterfeit a Fright;
So, sweetly screams if it comes near her,
She ravishes all Hearts to hear her,
Can dext'rously her Husband teize,
By taking Fits whene'er she please:
By frequent Practice learns the Trick
At proper Seasons to be sick;
Thinks nothing gives one Airs so pretty;
At once creating Love and Pity.
If Molly happens to be careless,
And but neglects to warm her Hair-Lace,
She gets a Cold as sure as Death;
And vows she scarce can fetch her Breath.
Admires how modest Women can
Be so robustious like a Man. (32-48)

It is significant that Stella and Vanessa do not practise such tricks. Vanessa has been "Instructed from her early Years/ To scorn the Art of Female Tears" (596-597). And Stella

wonders where the Charm appears
In Florimel's affected Fears:
For Stella never learn'd the Art,
At proper Times to scream and start;
Nor calls up all the House at Night,
And swears she saw a Thing in White.
Doll never flies to cut her Lace,
Or throw cold Water in her Face,
Because she heard a sudden Drum,
Or found an Earwig in a Plum.³³

A nastier because more subtle form of coquetry is prudery. The false modesty of Phillis, in whom Swift gives us his most fully developed portrait of a prude, is at once a revelation of her lasciviousness and the means she uses to titillate the men of whom she pretends to be afraid:

Desponding Phillis was endu'd
 With ev'ry Talent of a Prude,
 She trembled when a Man drew near;

 If o'er against her you were plac't
 She durst not look above your Wast;
 She'd rather take you to her Bed
 Than let you see her dress her Head;

 In Church, secure behind her Fan
 She durst behold that Monster, Man:
 There practic'd how to place her Head,
 And bit her Lips to make them red:
 Or on the Matt devoutly kneeling
 Would lift her Eyes up to the Ceiling,
 And heave her Bosom unaware
 For neighb'ring Beaux to see it bare. (1-18)

In his use of the appropriately devious device of irony in "devoutly", "unaware", and the repeated "durst"; and in his use, three times, of double entendre, Swift emphasises the tortuousness of prudery, the ambiguity of the prude's behaviour. The prude's world is obviously out of joint. Her behaviour, though comically described, shows her cynical lack of respect for men, for herself, and for the God-given order of which she is a part. It is a final irony that the setting for her performance is a church.

We have commented upon the consistency of Swift's attitude towards women as it is revealed in the poetry. In his last poems about men and women, however, in what he has to say about the unsound attitude associated with coquetry and prudery, he concentrates upon the shortcomings of men, not women: his Strephon and Cassinus, for example, are the culpable partners, not his Chloe and Caella.³⁴ Swift may be hinting that Chloe is affected when he tells us that "The bashful Nymph no more withstands, / Because her dear Papa commands."³⁵ On the other hand, there is nothing else in the poem to suggest that her bashfulness is assumed, that she is a coquette or a prude, or that she personally is responsible for Strephon's

false ideas about women. It is he who wonders whether "such a Deity" as Chloe can "endure/ A mortal human Touch impure?" (89-90) It is the effect of "Twelve Cups of Tea," not prudery, that causes her to repulse him. Caelia is not even present in the scene set before us in "Cassinus and Peter": it is Cassinus's attitude to Caelia with which we are presented, not Caelia's to Cassinus. Cassinus, himself wilfully unkempt and filthy, has been appropriately punished for his unrealistic attitude to Caelia: he has gone mad after discovering her "crime"--the involuntary human need to excrete.

These two poems and several others, including "The Lady's Dressing Room," "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," and the earlier "Progress of Beauty" constitute a group of which, it seems to me, the very raison d'être may have been the depth of Swift's concern with the failure of men and women--particularly of men--to accept the roles of their own and the opposite sex as human. In considering this group of poems, I believe, we shall come to the heart of the matter.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 1

¹The exact date of composition cannot be fixed. In the Miscellanies of 1711 it was assigned to 1698. No date is stated in the Miscellanies, 1727. Faulkner gives 1706. Deane Swift, Essay, 1755, p. 127, places it between 1703 and 1706. It may have been written earlier and revised about 1706." Williams, p. 60, headnote.

²"This poetical epistle was addressed to Lady Acheson, and must have been begun during one of Swift's visits to Market-Hill, 1728-30. We may surmise that, after a beginning, the poem was laid aside, and completed, with some revision of the earlier part, in 1732-3." Williams, p. 629, headnote.

³Commenting upon this line, in "The Echoic Poetry of Jonathan Swift: Studies in its Meaning," Diss. University of Florida 1968, p. 60, John Fischer claims that Swift knew there was no such passion, and that the advocate's description of it as "one which infallibly reduces its devotees to ashes, is both apt and laughable. Such passion, as the shepherds' advocate goes on to tell us, is nowhere discoverable in the world but was once sung by ancient poets." It seems to me that Fischer disregards the Platonic overtones of this description of love when he suggests that Swift is equating it with romantic delusion. See page 89 below.

⁴Compare "The Bubble," 91-92, and "A Panegyrick on the Dean," 319-324.

⁵The operative word is "disproportionate". As Tyne reminds us (523), Swift, in his Letter to a Young Lady, on her Marriage calls female interest in finery a folly but "a necessary folly" (Davis, IX, 91). Tyne continues: "Many societal ritualisms may appear senseless and foolish, but actually they have deep roots in the stuff of fallen humanity."

⁶Tyne contends that Vanessa's indignation with them is unrealistic and an indication of her lack of humanity and her resemblance to the Houyhnhnms. (Tyne, 524)

⁷Woman's incongruously serious attitude to trivialities (and, Swift implies, the neglect of her proper business) is also the object of his irony when he describes, in "The Progress of Marriage," Lady Jane's abstraction at dinner -- She "minds nothing that is done or said,/ Her ev'ning Work so fills her Head" (57-58) -- and again when, in "The Journal of a Modern Lady," he speaks of the disbanding of the Female Club, "Each twenty visits on her hands" (197). The underlining is mine.

⁸The "seditious pamphlet" was Swift's "Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture" (Davis, IX, 13-22). Not only did the Irish have to pay heavy duties on silks imported from England; they were also prohibited from exporting wool.

⁹See "The Bubble," 91-92.

10 "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift."

11 See Basil Willey's account of Thomism, quoted on page 13 above.

12 "A Panegyrick on the Dean," 145-146.

13 References to the upbringing of women and its results abound in the prose writings. Swift's thoughts on the subject are set out most fully, perhaps, in A Letter to a Young Lady, on Her Marriage (Davis, IX, 83-94). See also Hints: Education of Ladies (Davis, XII, 307-308), and Of the Education of Ladies (Davis, IV, 225-228).

14 See pages 67-68 below.

15 "To Their Excellencies the Lords Justices of Ireland. The Humble Petition of Frances Harris, who must Starve, and Die a Maid if it miscarries." Even the title suggests her loquacity.

16 Although "pedant" is an uncomplimentary term, it does suggest education of a sort. Swift may be using it ironically, or he may consider the housewife obsessed with minutiae to be the female equivalent of the pedant.

17 The position of the real Mrs. Harris in the Berkeley household may perhaps be judged from "A Ballad on the Game of Traffick."

18 "The Grand Question Debated."

19 "Mary the Cook-Maids Letter to Dr. Sheridan."

20 The underlining is mine.

21 "To Lord Harley, since Earl of Oxford, on his Marriage," 55-58.

22 "The Progress of Love,"

23 "Cadenus and Vanessa," 795.

24 "My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint Against the Dean," 45-46.

25 "Epistle to a Lady."

26 "Cadenus and Vanessa," 202-205, 680, and 472-476.

27 "Strephon and Chloe," 268, 271-272.

28 "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," 281.

29 Ibid., 287-288. Swift seems to have been especially impressed by the follies and shortcomings of Maids of Honour. Delany, writing of Swift's first visit to Pope at Twickenham, reports: "I also well remember, his making strange reports of the phraseologies of persons about the court (and particularly the maids of Honour) at the time of that visit." (Delany,

p. 75). For an account of the joke he and Dr. Arbuthnot played upon the Maids of Honour, see Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age, II (London: Methuen, 1967), 508-509.

30 "The Progress of Marriage."

31 "The Progress of Love."

32 "The Progress of Marriage."

33 "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," 69-78.

34 In "Strephon and Chloe" and "Cassius and Peter."

35 "Strephon and Chloe," 43-44.

II
THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN

CHAPTER 2
MEN'S SHARE OF THE BLAME

If Swift was more severe upon men than upon women, it was no doubt partly because of his awareness of a man's advantages, particularly the advantage of a greatly superior education. We have already considered his presentation of the deplorable mixture of ignorance and misinformation with which most women were equipped to face their responsibilities. In "Cadenus and Vanessa," he suggests outright that if a woman is to become the admirable creature she is capable of becoming, she must be given a man's education. In order to make Vanessa a perfect love object, Venus has to trick Pallas into mistaking the child for a boy, so that she will sow

within her tender Mind
Seeds long unknown to Womankind,
For manly Bosoms chiefly fit,
The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgment, Wit (202-205).

Swift goes further: in being educated as well as a boy, Vanessa as a mortal girl is actually unique.¹ Pallas

must with Grief reflect,
To see a Mortal Virgin deck'd
With Graces, hitherto unknown
To Female Breasts, except her own; (270-273)

Justice, truth, fortitude, honour, and generosity of heart and hand were not inborn, either. The infant Vanessa's "Soul was suddenly endu'd" with these virtues by the goddess who thought she was a boy. Mental and spiritual development go together. Stella's mental and spiritual attributes, like Vanessa's, are those usually associated with men, and her

gifts, too, came from outside herself.² In "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," Swift tells Stella that for her alone Prometheus

Stole The Fire that forms a manly Soul;
Then to compleat it ev'ry way,
He molded it with Female Clay:
To that you owe the nobler Flame.
To this, the Beauty of your Frame. (87-92)

At the beginning of this poem, furthermore, we were told of Pallas's observation that "Stella's Wit/ Was more than for her Sex was fit."

Although, with their educational advantages, men should be superior to women and able to help them, many of them display a mental poverty as bad as the women's. Some of these men, no doubt, are really stupid. The rest, presumably, are either playing up (or down) to the women, or cultivating a fashionable affectation for its own sake: in either case, they are not fulfilling the roles that their greater opportunities demand of them. The fops who gather round Vanessa are as little concerned as their female counterparts with rational talk and behaviour. Swift reproduces their tattle, and concludes:

Then in soft Voice and Speech absurd,
With Nonsense ev'ry second Word,
With Fustian from exploded Plays,
They celebrate her Beauty's Praise,
Run o'er their Cant of stupid Lies,
And tell the Murders of her Eyes. (328-333)

Later in the poem he speaks of "The common Beau"

Who, tho' he cannot spell, is wise
Enough to read a Lady's Eyes;
And will each accidental Glance
Interpret for a kind Advance. (813-817)

"The common Beau"--Swift sounds as if he were speaking of a species of butterfly or other subhuman creature. The Modern Lady's husband is a minor figure in her day's activities; but clearly he is of no help to his wife, silly himself and actually encouraging silliness in her. As he

listens to the "Dinner-Cant", "You see the Booby Husband sit/ In admiration at her Wit!" (114-115). On another occasion, the way a Captain responds to "Dinner Cant" shows him to be no more sensible than his hostess:

You're heartily welcome: But as for good Chear,
 You come in the very worst Time of the Year;
 If I had expected so worthy a Guest:--
 Lord! Madam! your Ladyship sure is in jest;
 You banter me, Madam, the Kingdom must grant--
 You Officers, Captain, are so complaisant.³

The Captain's subsequent conversation does nothing to remove our initial impression that he is an ass.

If men are too stupid or too wilful to profit from their own advantages, it is no wonder that they are poor judges of women. Before Venus gives up her attempt to put love back on a rational basis and abandons it to Cupid, leaving "all below at Six and Sev'n," she claims that she has been "cheated by the Swains." In response to their complaint "That Women were not worth the wooing," she has formed ("at Lord knows what Expence") "a Nymph of Wit and Sense,/ A Model for her Sex design'd." But the nymph has no lovers, and Venus sees that "her Favour was misplac'd;/ The Fellows had a wretched Taste." She concludes that they are "a senseless, stupid Race," and that

were she to begin agen,
 She'd study to reform the Men;
 Or add some Grains of Folly more
 To Women than they had before,
 To put them on an equal Foot;
 And this, or nothing else, wou'd do't.⁴

Even allowing for the fact that "Cadenus and Vanessa," whatever else it is, is a complimentary poem, probably designed at least to some extent for Esther Vanhomrigh's gratification, we have no reason to suppose that Swift meant us to take these concluding passages at other than their face value: in spite of their greater opportunities to acquire wisdom, men as a whole

in their dealings with women prove themselves to be "a senseless, stupid Race."

But Swift shows us that men can be worse than merely senseless and stupid in their attitude to women. The balance that should be maintained in marriage, for example, with both the man and the woman trying to live up to the demands of being human, is destroyed by the sins of the partners as well as the stupidity; and in at least three poems about unsatisfactory marriages, Swift places the full share of blame on the man's shoulders. In "A Quiet Life and a Good Name," the virago Nell is the initial offender, "roar[ing] incessant" at her husband. But he does nothing to restore the balance. Fatuously he tells his friend:

I suffer this for Peace;
I never quarrell with my Wife,
I bear it for a quiet Life. (14-16)

When she actually hits him, he will not take action because of what people would say. Swift comments upon his refusal to try to redress the balance:

Can he who makes himself a Slave
Consult his Peace, or Credit save?
Dick found it by his ill Success
His Quiet small, his Credit less;
Nell serv'd him at the usu'll Rate
She stun'd, and than she broke his Pate.
And what he thought the hardest Case,
The Parish jear'd him to his Face: (39-46)

In debasing himself from the status of a partner to that of a possession, Dick refuses to take on his full responsibilities in the marriage. In "His Graces's Answer to Jonathan," Swift is, of course, ridiculing Smedley's "An Epistle to his Grace the Duke of GRAFTON, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland." Smedley has asked:

But where shall SMEDLEY make his Nest,
And lay his wandring Head to Rest?
Where shall he find a decent House,
To treat his Friends, and chear his Spouse? (27-30)

He has told the Duke that "Spouse will think herself quite undone;/ To trudge to Clogher, from sweet London" (88-89). But Swift does not merely ridicule the ineptitude of Smedley's appeal for a better living. He suggests, as Robert George⁵ has pointed out, that Mrs. Smedley would not pine for the pleasures of Town if Smedley were giving her adequate love and attention. We should not, perhaps, jump to the conclusion that Swift is exalting sexuality in the brilliantly ambiguous second part of the poem (20-54); it could be ironic--impugning Smedley's virility or reflecting on his uxoriousness. Smedley has previously attacked Swift,⁶ who could be retaliating. But Swift does suggest that both male and female discontent may be connected with the man's neglect of the woman.⁷ Even in "The Progress of Marriage," at the end of which Swift expresses his anger at the wife in such strong terms, he blames the husband clearly enough for having made such an ill-balanced marriage in the first place. In describing the foolish figure the husband cuts, Swift is ruthless: on the wedding night,

The Bridegroom dress't, to make a Figure,
Assumes an artificiall Vigor;
A flourisht Night-cap on, to grace
His ruddy, wrinckled, smirking Face,
Like the faint red upon a Pippin
Half wither'd by a Winters keeping . . (21-26)

Later, at Bath, while his lady disports herself in the cross-bath, "He keeps his Distance in the Gallery/ Till banisht by some Coxcombs Raillery" (141-142). Swift comments:

So have I seen within a Pen
Young Ducklings, fostered by a Hen;
But when let out, they run and muddle
As Instinct leads them, in a Puddle;
The sober Hen not born to swim
With mournful Note clocks round the Brim. (145-150)

The husband, in casting himself in such an unsuitable role, Swift implies, is worse than foolish. Husband and wife might indeed be creatures of different species, for in this marriage there is

No common Ligament that binds
 The various Textures of their Minds,
 Their Thoughts, and Actions, Hopes, and Fears,
 Less corresponding than their Years. (33-36)

The husband "wonders what employs her Brain;/ But never asks, or asks in vain" (65-66). His attempts to understand her are feeble, for

His Mind is full of other Cares,
 And in the sneaking Parsons Airs
 Computes, that half a Parish Dues
 Will hardly find his Wife in Shoes (67-70).

Then Swift states explicitly what he has already implied: not only has the old "Swain" done his "Nymph" a gross injustice by marrying her; in his mistaken attempt to please her he has actually encouraged her coquettishness:

Canst thou imagine, dull Divine,
 'Twill gain her Love to make her fine?
 Hath she no other wants beside?
 You raise Desire as well as Pride,
 Enticing Coxcombs to adore,
 And teach her to despise thee more. (71-76)

Man's biggest contribution to the situation in which women are so deplorably inadequate and wrong-headed in the interpretation of their roles is the apparent inconsistency of his attitude to women: his "double standard." As it is generally used, the term refers to a man's assumption of the right to have it both ways, to be promiscuous himself and at the same time to expect fidelity from his wife. We use it to refer to the dichotomy that makes the man's code possible, the dichotomy in his own attitude to women which leads him to accept, or actively to make, two roles for them, one sub-human and one super-human. In debasing or exalting women, he puts himself out of harmony with the Divine order. He denies to woman her proper place in the Chain of Being, and thus abandons his own. As a human being he is capable of acting reasonably, and thus of recognising the humanity of others.

Swift's comments upon prostitution are all the more telling for being indirect. Most powerfully, he describes in detail the ravages of venereal disease (and its treatment) upon the prostitute. In both "The Progress of Beauty" and "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed,"⁸ he emphasises the horrors of the woman's dissolution by describing meticulously the steps she takes to hide it. He intensifies the horror still further by adopting an almost flippant tone. Because Swift speaks through a persona, the heartless manner does not hide his compassion⁹ but, by contrast, reveals it all the more powerfully. Celia, of "The Progress of Beauty," swakes and for four hours repairs her make-up -- and the already wasted flesh beneath. "She ventures now to lift the Sash,/ The Window is her proper Sphear" -- and the poet warns her: "Ah Lovely Nymph be not too rash,/ Nor let the Beaux approach too near" (65-68). Only in the dark, or through the window of a sedan chair can she still appear "wondrous fair." Her future is still more grim:

But, Art no longer can prevayl
When the Materialls all are gone,
The best Mechanick Hand must fayl
Where Nothing's left to work upon. (77-80)

.
When Mercury her Tresses mows
To think of Oyl and Soot, is vain,
No Painting can restore a Nose,
Nor will her Teeth return again.

Two Balls of Glass may serve for Eyes,
White Lead can plaister up a Cleft,
But these alas, are poor Supplyes
If neither Cheeks, nor Lips be left. (109-116)

Then comes the shocking conclusion, with its unspoken comment on the concept of love held by the men the ironic persona represents:

Ye Pow'rs who over Love preside,
Since mortal Beautyes drop so soon,

If you would have us well supply'd,
Send us new Nymphs with each new Moon. (117-120)

Beauties are perishable, expendable, objects to be "supplied" for the use of men who will destroy thirteen of them in a year: they are degraded as low as the rank of inanimate objects in the scale of being. "The Beautiful Young Nymph" Corinna's dismantling of herself before going to bed is even more completely described. The poet does not venture to write about the reconstruction:

The Nymph, tho' in this mangled Plight,
Must ev'ry Morn her Limbs unite.
But how shall I describe her Arts
To recollect the scatter'd Parts?
Or shew the Anguish, Toil, and Pain,
Of gath'ring up herself again?
The bashful Muse will never bear
In such a Scene to interfere.
Corinna in the Morning dizen'd,
Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poison'd. (65-74)

Her physical dissolution is not the only hardship Corinna suffers. Her trade is no longer enough to support her adequately: there is "No drunken rake to pick her up,/ No cellar where on Tick to sup." After "Returning at the Midnight Hour" and climbing "Four Stories . . . to her Bow'r" (5-8), she goes to bed hungry. She cannot even find refuge in sleep. The pains of her disease keep her awake, and if she sleeps at all, she has nightmares about her all too probable future. She is hag-ridden on the one hand by visions of "Watchmen, Constables and Duns," of Bridewell and the terrifying punishment she will receive at the hands of the law: she

feels the Lash, and faintly screams
.....
Or to Jamaica seems transported,
Alone, and by no Planter courted. (41, 45-46)

On the other hand, she is beset by fears of the dangers against which the law gives her no protection because she is outside the law: she imagines her plight when "by a faithless Bully drawn,/ At some Hedge-Tavern [she]

lies in Pawn." And she has a horrifying vision of how she will practise her profession when only the worst of beats remains open to her: she

near Fleet-Ditch's oozy Brinks,
Surrounded with a Hundred Stinks,
Belated, seems on watch to lye,
And snap some Cully passing by (41-51).

In what seems to be an aside, Swift closes his description of Corinna's dream by drawing our attention to a most flagrant example of a double standard: from the watchmen, constables and duns, Corinna

meets with frequent Rubs;
But, never from Religious Clubs;
Whose Favour she is sure to find,
Because she pays 'em all in Kind. (52-55)

The implied indictment of the men who heartlessly use women without regard for their humanity is compounded still further: even as he dwells upon the physical horrors of the prostitute's state, Swift writes of her as if she were a goddess, and in doing so, he echoes the appalling confusion of values that the men exhibit. Even in the most callous and bestial dealings with women, such men pay lip service to the conventions of woman-worship, the blasphemy against Divine order that seems to be at the opposite extreme: "Corinna, Pride of Drury-Lane,/ For whom no Shepherd sighs in vain" (1-2), is "the lovely Goddess," "the Nymph." In "The Progress of Beauty," the irony is still more pointed: the comparison between the goddess Diana and the mortal Celia, between the moon that Diana represents and poor "rotting Celia," is not only sustained throughout the poem, it is its organizing device. Celia's worshipper typifies the sin at the root of the double standard:

To see her from her Pillow rise
All reeking in a cloudy Steam,
Crackt Lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes,
Poor Strephon, how would he blaspheme! (13-16)

Committing the real blasphemy of debasing another human being and

simultaneously making her an object of worship, Strephon, if he saw things as they really are, would think only in terms of false blasphemy against her supposed divinity. The Strephon of "The Lady's Dressing-Room" does see things as they really are when he "looks behind the scene" (133). We have no evidence that Celia is a prostitute or that he has or has not debased her. Otherwise his blasphemy is exactly like that of his namesake in "The Progress of Beauty." He

impiously blasphemes
Her Ointments, Daubs, and Paints and Creams,
Her Washes, Slops, and every Clout,
With which he makes so foul a Rout. (137-140)

Bad poets help to perpetuate the wicked myth. In "To STELLA, Who Collected and Transcribed his POEMS," Swift writes of

the Goddesses enroll'd
In Curll's Collections, new and old,
Whose Scoundrel Fathers would not know'em,
If they should meet'em in a Poem. (49-52)

Anyone seeking the "Bow'rs" of "those Nymphs divine" would be disillusioned. He would find, for example, "The charming Silvia beating Flax,/ Her Shoulders mark'd with bloody Tracks" (45-46), "and radiant Iris in the Pox" (48).

Swift never lets us forget the mortality of these "Goddesses". His description of the physical dissolution of Celia and Corinna makes it obvious enough, but he goes still further. Corinna, with her padding and her false hair, eyebrows, teeth and eye is not only pitiable; she is a ghastly and horrifying figure of fun. Swift, through his persona, is echoing the heartlessness and inhumanity of mankind in the tone he adopts. In making Corinna's plight seem actually ludicrous, he is exposing the enormity of the offence men have committed against her, the offence of pretending to regard as more than human a mortal creature in whom the

natural processes of decay have been accelerated by their less than human treatment of her. But he is also emphasising with hammer blows the inescapable mortality of all human beings, and the folly as well as the blasphemy of deifying such fragile and perishable creatures. It is as a goddess, not a woman, that Corinna is grimly laughable. Swift drives home still harder his lesson about the true nature and status of poor Corinna. Even at the bottom of the pit, she has no security from further disaster, and ludicrous disaster at that:

CONINNA wakes. A dreadful Sight!
Behold the Ruins of the Night!
A wicked Rat her Plaister stole,
Half eat, and dragg'd it to his Hole.
The Crystal Eye, alas, was miss't;
And Puss had on her Plumpers p---st.
A Pigeon pick'd her Issue-Peas;
And Shock her Tresses fill'd with Fleas. (57-64)

Flatterers and would-be seducers of women, from the days of Ovid and no doubt before, have addressed women, in verse at least, as goddesses and assumed the attitudes of worshippers, and the ploy has been generally recognised for what it is. Real confusion begins, however, when the worship becomes genuine, when the lover's aim ceases to be simple seduction and he begins to devote and divert to a human object the adoration that, for a Christian, properly belongs to his Maker. It is significant that medieval churchmen attacked courtly love not because it was immoral, but because it was a religion -- a rival religion to Christianity.¹⁰ There is evidence in the poems that in his attitude to woman-worship as in other matters Swift was in the main stream of traditional orthodox belief. He expatiates most fully on the delusions of the lover who cherishes the belief that his beloved is more than mortal in "Strephon and Chloe," "The Lady's Dressing-Room," and "Cassinus and Peter."

In the hyperbole-packed description of Chloe at the beginning of

"Strephon and Chloe," Swift establishes firmly her goddess-like status in the eyes of her suitors: "So beautiful a Nymph appears/ But once in Twenty Thousand Years." (3-4) She is "faultless". Her beauty "Confest her of no mortal Race" (8). Because she is scrupulously clean, her body seems "taintless," and because she is never seen

to pluck a Rose,

 You'd swear, that so divine a Creature
 Felt no Necessities of Nature (16, 19-20).

Referring so specifically to feet and armpits, to the "noisome Whiffs and Sweaty Streams," that Chloe keeps free from, Swift is startling us into remembering the facts of human physiology so that we are in no danger of forgetting that it is only Chloe's fastidiousness about personal hygiene that prevents her mortal nature from being obvious. Strephon is not a seducer, and he does not merely pretend to think her a goddess; he seeks to marry her, and when he has succeeded, he contemplates his wedding-night with religious awe, "For, as he view'd his Person round,/ Meer mortal flesh was all he found" (75-76). What if, in spite of his washing to keep himself sweet, he should sweat,

While she a Goddess dy'd in Grain
 Was unsusceptible of Stain:
 And Venus-like, her fragrant Skin
 Exhal'd Ambrosia from within (85-88)?

If "such a Deity" can after all "endure/ A mortal human Touch impure" (89-90), can the mortal lover survive the embrace? Strephon remembers

That, once he heard a School-boy tell,
 How Semele of mortal Race,
 By Thunder dy'd in Jove's Embrace;
 And what if daring Strephon dies
 By Lightning shot from Chloe's Eyes? (106-110)

Strephon is soon to be disillusioned. The Strephon of "The Lady's Dressing-Room" is disillusioned when he explores the dressing-room of

his "Goddess" who "from her Chamber issues,/ Array'd in Lace, Brocades and Tissues" (3-4). Cassinus has been the most deeply deluded worshipper, if we are to judge by the violence of his reactions when he is disabused. He never claims in so many words to have thought of Caelia as a goddess; but the whole point of the poem is that he has done so, impiously and disastrously.

Cassinus has broken the first commandment, and his punishment is madness, first indicated by the filthy disarray, so much worse than the conventionally disordered appearance of the lovelorn, in which we see him at the beginning of the poem. It becomes clear that his madness is punishment for guilt when it takes the form of a vision of the hell that awaits him. "And there --" he exclaims, "behold Alecto stand,/ A Whip of Scorpions in her Hand." He sees Charon beckoning, and Medusa and her serpents advancing upon him. "Begone; unhand me, hellish Fry," he cries; "Avaunt--Ye cannot say 'twas I." (81-88) The echo of Macbeth in the last line suggests that this is the madness of a guilty man. In Macbeth's case, the crime he said the ghost of Banquo could not saddle him with was in fact a crime Macbeth had committed. Cassinus's guilt and madness are indicated yet more clearly by the reference to the Fury Alecto. We are reminded that it was the special function of the Furies or Eumenides to punish the guilty; in hell, by unceasing flagellation, on earth by the stings of conscience and by actual madness if they ventured into the temple of the Eumenides--holy ground.

But Cassinus has also failed to love his neighbour as himself. He has sinned not only against his Creator but also against a fellow occupant of his rank in the scale of being; and of this sin his madness is at once a punishment and a result. This becomes clear when we examine

his dialogue with Peter concerning Caelia's "crime". Cassinus "at last, with Grief oppress'd, / Cry'd 'Caelia!' thrice, and sigh'd the rest." (39-40) Peter at once prepares to hear the worst--that Caelia is dead. Cassinus's answer, "How happy I, were that the worst? / But I was fated to be curs'd" (43-44), shows us that his grief is for himself. Caelia is merely an instrument used by fate to curse him; he would rather she died than that he should suffer at her hands. Thus we see at the outset that his feeling for her is not love at all, and that he regards her as an object rather than a person. In the ensuing dialogue, this impression is confirmed. But at the same time, bewilderingly, we find that Cassinus has arrived through his very selfishness at an attitude to Caelia that sounds remarkably like Christian love. He shows that he would not be turned from her by her moral shortcomings, and that he would regard as unimportant her loss of beauty and even her death. His concern is centred, apparently, in her immortal soul, for the cause of his distress is that "Caelia has contriv'd to blast / Those Beauties that might ever last" (53-54). Nevertheless, the concern is entirely selfish. "Imagination" cannot "guess",

Nor Eloquence Divine express,
How that ungrateful charming Maid,
My purest Passion has betray'd.
Conceive the most invenom'd Dart,
To pierce an injur'd Lover's Heart. (55-60)

She is "ungrateful", a sorceress ("charming"); he is "injur'd"; she "has betray'd." His passion is "purest", and even god-inspired eloquence could not express the evil she has done. But when Peter suggests that Caelia's offence was to love someone else (the barber's boy, Cassinus's social and probably intellectual inferior), Cassinus, it seems, displays Christian magnanimity and willingness to respect Caelia as a person:

Friend Peter, this I could excuse;
For, ev'ry Nymph has Leave to chuse

Nor, have I Reason to complain:
 She loves a more deserving Swain. (63-66)

Now he refers yet again to her offence, this time in even stronger language; the deed is a crime, universally shocking and committed by no other woman in the world. The crime has utterly crushed him; he is in un-Christian despair, and about to die. Only in someone deranged, surely, could such inconsistent attitudes exist simultaneously.

When at last we learn that the circumstance worse than Caelia's death, dishonour, disfigurement, or falling in love with someone worthier is simply her having to excrete like the rest of humanity, we realise that Cassinus's wilful holding of inconsistent attitudes may have led directly to the disintegration of his mind; the contradictory forces may have pulled it apart: he has persisted in regarding her as both super-human and sub-human, instead of accepting the truth that she is human. He could accept unscathed the ugly moral facts: Caelia could be a whore; he could accept the accompanying ugly physical facts; she could be syphilitic; he could accept some of the ugly physical facts by which humanity is limited regardless of guilt or innocence: unavoidable death, and the ravages of unavoidable smallpox. The "Beauties that might ever last" are, to Cassinus, untouched by any of these uglinesses, but utterly destroyed by the ugliness of the human need to excrete. The wheel has come full circle: Cassinus has equated immortality of soul with un-mortality of bodily function.

What is at the same time insane and mortally sinful in Cassinus is his inability to consider having to excrete in the same light as being subject to smallpox and having to die. Of these three manifestations of mortality, only the need to excrete is entirely lacking in dignity.¹¹ Death or disfigurement can be tragic; excretion cannot. Cassinus has

accepted Caelia as mortal, and as morally evil or flawed: yet he has insisted upon putting her in the place of God as an object of worship. He does not love her -- he has used her to minister to his own needs; not loving her, he cannot accept her when she does the one thing that cannot be elevated, that keeps her on his own level. And his madness is not only his punishment and the consequence of his crime but also a manifestation of the chaos that prevails when man tries to put woman out of her proper place in the scale of being.

Although every woman-worshipper does not lose his reason, when he is forced to see that his worship is misplaced, instead of achieving a reasonable equilibrium he is apt to swing to the opposite extreme in his attitude. Strephon is so disgusted by what he has seen and smelt in Celia's dressing-room that he can never again look at a woman without revulsion:

His foul Imagination links
Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks:
And, if unsav'ry Odours fly,
Conceives a Lady standing by:
All Women his Description fits,
And both Idea's jump like Wits:
By vicious Fancy coupled fast,
And still appearing in Contrast. (121-128)¹²

The disillusionment of Chloe's Strephon is less painful, but it, too, is associated with a violent change of attitude and with the loss of love. When Chloe stops being the fastidious girl who "plucks a Rose" only when alone, Strephon, emboldened by finding her "As mortal as himself at least" (186) does not recoil in horror--he follows her example. The immediate result is that

The little Cupids hov'ring round,
(As Pictures prove) with Garlands crown'd,
Abasht at what they saw and heard,
Flew off, nor evermore appear'd.
Adieu to ravishing Delights,

High Raptures, and romantick Flights;
 To Goddesses so heav'nly sweet,
 Expiring Shepherds at their Feet;
 To silver Meads, and shady Bow'rs,
 Drest up with Amaranthine Flow'rs. (193-202)

Strephon loses his romantic illusions without being immediately revolted.

Instead, Swift suggests, he descends with Chloe to the animal level:

How great a Change! how quickly made!
 They learn to call a Spade, a Spade.
 They soon from all Constraint are freed;
 Can see each other do their Need.

 And, by the beastly way of Thinking,
 Find great Society in Stinking. (203-210)

Strephon's love cannot survive such a descent: eventually Chloe's abandonment of "decency" will kill it, "For fine Ideas vanish fast,/ While all the gross and filthy last" (233-234). The poet tells Strephon that if before he had married her he had seen his bride "on House of Ease," he would never have found " . . . from Experience . . . too late,/ His Goddess grown a filthy Mate," for, exactly like the other Strephon, he would for ever afterwards have associated everything about her with the privy, "And, spite of Chloe's Charm divine,/ Your Heart had been as whole as mine." (249-250).

The mistake of the Strephons was in fixing their affections on the ephemeral, the girl's apparent physical perfection, and regarding it as divine, immortal and to be worshipped. Had they asked themselves:

What House, when its Materials crumble,
 Must not inevitably tumble?
 What Edifice can long endure,
 Rais'd on a Basis unsecure? (297-300)

they might have had more realistic ideas, not only about youth and beauty, but also about all things purely physical. They might have plunged about less wildly had they thought in terms of the give and take of a relationship with another human being, not a "goddess". If they had had no

illusions in the first place, they would not have had to suffer disillusionment, and they might have found the balanced and lasting love of which truly human beings are capable:

On Sense and Wit your Passion found,
By Decency cemented round;
Let Prudence with Good Nature strive,
To keep Esteem and Love alive.
Then come old Age whene'er it will,
Your Friendship shall continue still:
And thus a mutual gentle Fire,
Shall never but with Life expire. (307-314)

But although ideally man is animal rationale, most of the time he is merely rationis capax.¹³

The chaos associated with man's forgetting the boundaries of the human sphere manifests itself throughout his system of values. We have already considered the appalling confusion of Cassinus about "those beauties that might ever last,"¹⁴ and of two of the Strephons about blasphemy.¹⁵ Swift suggests the values of Chloe's worshippers (described with comic exaggeration as "all Men") by reducing their behaviour and possessions, appropriately, to a rag-bag of nouns and verbals of apparently similar significance and equal importance:

Think what a Case all Men are now in,
What ogling, sighing, toasting, vowing!
What powder'd Wigs! What Flames and Darts!
What Hampers full of bleeding Hearts!
What Sword-knots! What Poetic Strains!
What Billet-doux, and clouded Cains! (33-38)

To those beaux, Swift suggests, the fashionable appurtenances are just as important as the "love" they are professing. The chaos is often characterised by excessive concern about externals, as we have seen in the cases of the Strephons and Cassinus, and in the cases of women who respond to such concern in men--or play upon it--by giving excessive attention to dress and cosmetics. When a woman's inordinate interest in her appearance

goes with a lack of personal fastidiousness, as in the case of Celia in "The Lady's Dressing-Room," the confusion is compounded: even according to her own dubious standards, her priorities are in a wild disorder, reflected in the physical disorder of her dressing-room. Another element in the confusion is the actual rejection, by the "senseless, stupid Race," of what Swift presents as truly valuable in women: the "Wit and Sense" that the men fear because it puts them to shame. Chaos here gives way to a more obviously evil form of disorder: a direct inversion of values. Debasing themselves before the foolish creatures they profess to worship, men fly from the women who are really their superiors and do not hide the fact: a Vanessa¹⁶ has no suitors.

In the earliest of the poems we are considering, "Verses wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book," Swift presents an interlocking pattern of inverted values, appropriately, by means of paradox and antithesis. The beau who puts this far from perfect lady on a pedestal is nevertheless her inferior in fact as well as in the attitude he assumes. But she loses stature in giving him the chance to treat her as better than she is. The lady's heart may, like the table-book, be

Scrawl'd o'er with Trifles thus, and quite
As hard, as senseless, and as light:
Expos'd to every Coxcomb's Eyes,
But hid with Caution from the Wise (3-6);

but what she writes is at least unpretentious: "A new Receipt for Paint," "A safe way to use Perfume," and an account of expenditure for "an el breth," shoes, and "half a Yard of Lace." In contrast, the beau's entries are characterised by all the unrealistic, romantic extravagance of expression and attitude that we have observed in the later poems: "Dear Charming Saint--tru tel deth---lovely Nymph pronounce my doom--- Madam, I Dye without your Grace." She is not a saint, not a divinity with

the power of granting or withholding grace: she is an ignorant, empty-headed girl. But as a human being she merits Swift's reproof for leaving the table-book out:

For every peeping Fop to Jear.
To think that your Brains Issue is
Expos'd to th' Excrement of his,
In power of Spittle and a Clout
When e're he please to blot it out;
And then to heighten the Disgrace
Clap his own Nonsense in the place. (18-24)

As in the later poems, the mention of excrement emphasises the mortality of human beings; and the contrasting entries in the table-book serve as objective correlative of the underlying antitheses. The beau's high-flown sentiments are "Excrement"; the girl's commonplaces are the honest issue of her vapid but down-to-earth brain. In balancing the apparent against the real value of the sentiments, and the sentiments against the commonplaces, Swift shows that trivial-minded though the girl is, she is the beau's superior; it is unfitting that she gives him the chance to erase her comments with the literal excrement of his spittle.

To direct our attention to the root cause of disorder attendant upon the deification of women, Swift uses two main devices: mock-heroics, to undercut the human pretentiousness inherent in such deification; and scat-ology, to emphasise the mortality that makes such pretentiousness absurd.

By mock-heroics Swift ensures at the outset of "A Beautiful Young Nymph" that we see Corinna as she is, simultaneously giving her glamour and taking it away by describing her in terms of pastoral idyll even as he tells us unequivocally that she is a prostitute. And in doing so, of course, he strikes directly at the double standard: "Corinna, Pride of Drury Lane/ For whom no Shepherd sighs in vain . . ." (1-2). Similarly, he sustains the ironic attitude and undercuts the illusion-based hopes of

human bride and groom by mock-heroic description of marriage rites. The wedding of Strephon and Chloe, for example, was attended by Hymen, Venus and "Her infant Loves with purple Wings," Apollo and the Muses, the Graces, Mercury, Hebe, Mars, and Juno. (47-66) The occasion, graced by so many divinities, seems to be of epic importance.¹⁷ But Swift suggests the earthy human reality, both by his inclusion of sparrows¹⁸ in Venus's train, and by informal diction--"Squire Apollo," "Dame Juno," "To make the Matter sure."¹⁹ In the description of the wedding in "The Progress of Marriage," Swift is more explicit in making the contrast between the imaginary world of epic personages and the real world of sober middle-aged groom and flighty young bride. Ominously, Venus, the Graces, and the Muses all refused their invitations, Juno came no further than "the Porch/ With farthing Candle for a Torch," Iris "held her Train,/ The faded Bow distilling Rain," and although Hebe came, she "showed no more than half her Face." By a twist of the device of mock-heroics, Swift has suggested the whole sad story that will probably ensue: the husband's inadequacy, the wife's tears, and the disastrous results of the steps she will take to remedy her discontent.

Not only does Swift use the trappings of epic in such long set-pieces as these but also, less obtrusively, he uses mock-heroics in his diction. His earthily expressed advice to the parents of brides that they should keep their daughters from "guzzling Beer," drinking tea in the evening, and eating "what causes Wind," reaches a nicely calculated climax in the sonorous and sublime-sounding lines: "Carminative and Diuretick,/ Will damp all Passion Sympathetick."²⁰ In countless examples, Swift shows himself the master of the perfectly-placed earthy word in a passage of preponderantly mannered and formal language.²¹ A little later in the same

poem he writes:

Say, fair ones, must I make a Pause?
Or freely tell the secret Cause.
Twelve Cups of Tea, (with Grief I speak)
Had now constrain'd the Nymph to leak. (161-164)

It is not surprising that mock-heroics and scatology so often go hand in hand in the poetry, for it is hard to imagine a more forceful way of emphasising the mortal weakness of the human beings who have been elevated to godlike status by their fellows.

Swift makes such contrasts when writing about the grand manner as well as when using it. In "An Answer to a scandalous Poem, wherein the Author most audaciously presumes to cast an Indignity upon their Highnesses the Clouds, by comparing them to a Woman," Swift, in the character of "Dermot O-Nephely, Chief Cap of Howth," reproves the poets who ridiculously exalt women; and, characteristically, he puts woman in her true place by a paradoxical twist of mock-heroic treatment: clouds, though inferior to women in the scale of being, have roles that women cannot perform. By exalting the status of the clouds, and dwelling on the mortal limitations of the woman, Swift comments indirectly as well as directly on the folly and error of the poets:

'Tis sung, where-ever Celia treads,
The Vi'lets ope their Purple Heads;
The Roses blow, the Cowslip springs;
'Tis sung, but we know better Things.
'Tis true; a Woman on her Mettle,
Will often p--ss upon a Nettle;
But, though we own, she makes it wetter,
The Nettle never thrives the better;
While we, by soft prolifick Show'rs,
Can ev'ry Spring produce you Flow'rs. (143-152)

"Gods like us," claims Dermot O-Nephely, are not offended or demeaned by the hyperbole of poets, however. The clouds remember that "Each Drab has been compar'd to Venus" (157-160). We note in passing that yet once more a serious thought is contained in a jeu d'esprit.

A particularly telling example of the use of scatology and mock-heroics to demolish a misplaced fondness for the grand manner occurs in "A Panegyrick on the Dean," written in 1730 during Swift's last visit to Market Hill. About the same time, that is during one of the three visits Swift made to Market Hill between 1728 and 1730, he began a poem addressed to his hostess: "An Epistle to a Lady, who desired the Author to make Verses on Her, in the Heroick Stile." In this poem, he rejects "the lofty Stile" as unsuitable for his purpose. It seems probable that in "A Panegyrick" he still has in mind Lady Acheson's hankerings to be immortalised by verses in the grand manner. Speaking in the character of the lady, he ends a catalogue of the Dean's activities and achievements at Market Hill with a mock-heroic description of the building of privies, an improvement for which it appears Swift was responsible. Addressing the goddess Cloacine, he continues:

Yet, when your lofty Domes I praise,
I sigh to think of antient Days.
Permit me then to raise my Style,
And sweetly moralize a while. (225-228)

There follows a ninety-line passage about human excrement and the origin and history of privies, all in the high-flown style promised in the introductory lines, and embellished with such machinery of the Christian epic as the Deadly Sins.²² The very length of the passage, which at first sight seems disproportionate, is perhaps part of the mock-heroic treatment of the theme. At last it ends:

But, stop ambitious Muse, in time;
Nor dwell on Subjects too sublime.
In vain on lofty Heels I tread,
Aspiring to exalt my Head:
With Hoop expanded wide and light,
In vain I tempt too high a Flight. (319-324)

It is clear from other verses about Lady Acheson that, in Swift's opinion, she did not aspire enough in the things that mattered:²³ he makes her

sound as if she would have been glad to relax instead of trying to improve her mind, as Swift was constantly hounding her to do. As we have already noticed, he seems also to have thought that she cared too much about fine clothes, as well as the "fine" style in complimentary verses. In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," Swift brings together her weaknesses, and teaches her a lesson. Undercutting the grand style by using it to write of the least grand of human functions, he is not merely teaching Lady Acheson better taste in style; he is reminding her that creatures who excrete have no business trying to exalt themselves to god-like status. In other terms, man is effectively reminded of his right relationship with God when he is reminded of his excretions.²⁴

In the lines immediately following the passage we have just considered, Lady Acheson recalls the dream in which, in sharply contrasting language, Phoebus reminded her of her proper business:

Go shake your Cream,
Be humbly minded; know your Post;
Sweeten your Tea, and watch your Toast.
Thee best befits a lowly Style. (325-328)

Having enumerated her domestic duties in similar fashion, Phoebus concludes: "Be these thy Arts; nor higher Aim/ Than what befits a rural Dame." (341-342) On this occasion, although Swift at the climax of his lesson is tempering it with teasing, he does not weaken the contrasts he has made by any mention of the less lowly roles that, according to what he says elsewhere, he thinks she ought to undertake.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

¹The most obvious purpose of the exaggeration is to heighten the compliment to Esther Vanhomrigh.

²See pages 38-39 above.

³"The Grand Question Debated," 121-127. It is immaterial that we are receiving the Captain's words at third-hand.

⁴"Cadenus and Vanessa," 859-877.

⁵Paper delivered at a seminar on Swift's poetry, conducted at the University of Florida by Professor Aubrey Williams in the Fall Quarter, 1969.

⁶He was responsible for, among other things, "the famous verses (Gulliveriana, p. 77; Nichols's Supplement, 1779; Scott, Memoirs, p. 176 n.) said to have been affixed to the door of St. Patrick's Cathedral, at the time of Swift's installation as Dean." Williams, p. 360, n.

⁷Professor Aubrey Williams has pointed out to me that in Laputa men neglect their wives with similar results. See Gulliver's Travels, III, Chapter 2 (Davis, XI, 165-166).

⁸See John Aden's excellent article, "Corinna and the Sterner Muse of Swift," ELN, 4 (1966), 23-31, which includes a review of previous criticism of the poem.

⁹It is for more fortunate women, too, that Swift reserves his censures. He does not weaken our pity for his prostitutes by mentioning their failings. (Admittedly, they could hardly afford the follies and affectations of the Modern Lady.) There is even, perhaps, a suggestion of gallantry about Corinna, in spite of the irony of Swift's description: "Never did Covent Garden boast/ So bright a batter'd, strolling Toast." (3-4) But note Aden's comments on these lines (Aden, 25). Delany's account of Swift's regular "walking" among the Dublin poor, in which "he literally followed the example of his blessed Saviour, and 'went about doing good'," suggests that his compassion for the Corinnas took practical form. He bought from the sellers of tape, gingerbread and so on, and in the case of those "whose saleables were of another nature, he added something to their store: with strict charges of industry and honesty" (Delany, pp. 130-134 and 260-261).

¹⁰As C.S. Lewis points out, in The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1936), p. 14, "according to the medieval view passionate love itself was wicked," whether in or out of marriage. For a full account of the incompatibility of Christianity and the religion of courtly love, see Alexander J. Denomy, The Heresy of Courtly Love (New York: the Declan X. McMullen Company, Inc., 1947).

¹¹Donald Greene, in his essay "On Swift's 'Scatological' Poems," Sewanee Review, 75 (1967), 672-689, draws our attention to the basic sin underlying Cassinus's attitude: "While one side of his divided mind is perfectly content with fetor and squalor, the other entertains an inflated 'image' of himself, drawn from his readings in romantic poetry, which nothing less than a completely ethereal Caelia will suffice. It is this preposterous arrogance, the blind enslavement to an ego-boosting illusion -- products of the human sin of pride -- that Swift, a perfectly orthodox Christian moralist, discerns and condemns here as in so many other places." (Greene, 676)

¹²Greene points out the similarity between Strephon's sin and Cassinus's. "Strephon . . . is the victim of his 'foul Imagination' and 'vicious Faacy,' which in the first place demanded for his inflated ego a superhuman partner, then deluded itself that in Celia he had obtained the paragon he felt himself entitled to, and now, when his fantasy world collapses, makes him see in every woman only her excretory functions. . . . This is madness; this is obsession; this is 'thé excremental vision,' which makes a fetish of the routine, trivial, and harmless fact of human excretion; and this is what the poem pillories." (Greene, 677)

¹³"I have got materials towards a treatis proving the falsity of that Definition animal rationale; and to shew it should be only rationis capax." Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725. (Correspondence, III, 103)

¹⁴See above, pages 62-63.

¹⁵See above, pages 57-58.

¹⁶If Tyne is right, however, Vanessa herself is at fault. Noting "the common-sense realism" of Swift in accepting the foibles of human nature and seeing their necessity, he thinks that Vanessa is above herself, and with "her extravagant expectations of what human nature is capable of," is "as much a butt of Swift's comic ridicule as the Strephons of the anti-romantic poems or the Gulliver of the fourth book of the Travels" (Tyne, 519). In contrast, Ohlin argues that Vanessa, before her passion for Cadenus disturbs her judgment, "conforms perfectly to Swift's understanding of what is admirable in a woman," and is the embodiment of the ideal set fourth in A Letter to a Young Lady, on Her Marriage (Ohlin, 489-490).

¹⁷Greene suggests that here we have "the clichés of Grub Street," and that "perhaps Swift is making the point that it is emphatically not a Christian marriage" (Greene, 681).

¹⁸Sparrows are traditionally lecherous, and here actually "treading". They are also the commonest of birds and the least grand in appearance.

¹⁹Cf. Maurice Johnson, The Sin of Wit (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), p. 110. Johnson quotes the lines ". . . Pigeons billing, Sparrows treading, / Fair Emblems of a fruitful Wedding" (51-52), and "The Rites perform'd, the Parson paid, / In State return'd the grand Parade" (67-68), and comments: "Here the humorous joining of formal and colloquial serves as the motif for the whole poem: this is Strephon's story of how he

idealized his bride as a deity only to discover her a human animal like him, his poetic dream becoming as much a down-to-earth reality as the shameless sparrows and the fees for the parson."

²⁰Maurice Johnson also notes the effect of these lines. See The Sin of Wit, pp. 111-112.

²¹See especially the final line of "Cassinus and Peter." For other examples of the perfectly placed word, note "worship" in the last line of the birthday poem for Stella, 1719, and "senseless" in line 141 of "The Journal of a Modern Lady."

²²Cf. Spenser, The Faerie Queene, I,i,4. Swift claims that it was because of the effects of gluttony that privies had to be invented. Although he is saying something about gluttony here, and although he may have the morality play as well as the Christian epic in mind, it seems to me that the main purpose of his introducing Gluttony personified is probably mock-heroic.

²³See below, pages 77-78.

²⁴For this reason, it seems to me unnecessary to seek biographical or psychological causes for Swift's comparatively extensive use of scatology, which so patently has a theological function. The theory that in writing of the excremental Swift was fulfilling a serious moral purpose is far from new, although it has not always been in fashion. Of "The Lady's Dressing Room" Orrery notes (albeit grudgingly) that the best way to defend the poem "is to suppose, that the author exhibited his CELIA in the most hideous colours he could find, lest she might be mistaken as a goddess, when she was only a mortal" (p. 79). Although Delany's first reaction to the scatological poems was unmitigated disgust, his second thoughts were "that they are the prescriptions of an able physician who had, in truth, the health of his patients at heart" (p. 178). Recent variations on the theme are numerous. In Swift and Scatological Satire (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), Jae Num Lee states the central fact: "Since pride stems from man's exaggerated view of his own importance and superiority, scatology is one of the most effective devices for shattering man's hubris." (p. 45) He comments later, "the more heartily we can laugh by means of scatological humor, the more completely we accept ourselves as mortal beings. For such a purpose, a true humanist does not shy away from scatology. On the contrary, he is almost obligated to use it" (p. 122). See also the works by Aden, Greene and Maurice Johnson that we have already cited, and also Herbert Davis, "A Modest Defence of 'The Lady's Dressing Room,'" in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 39-48; E. San Juan Jr., The Anti-Poetry of Jonathan Swift, PQ, 44 (1965), 387-396; Reid B. Sinclair, "'What the World Calls Obscene': Swift's 'Ugly' Verse and the Satiric Tradition." Dissertation Abstracts, 26 (1966), 1028-1029 (Vanderbilt University).

II THE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN

CHAPTER 3 THE IDEAL

We can, of course, deduce a great deal about Swift's idea of how a woman's part should be played from his presentation of a woman's failure to fill her station adequately. Indeed, "The Journal of a Modern Lady," devoted entirely to the satirical analysis of the out-of-joint way of life, may be seen as a demonstration by contrast of the ideal from which the Modern Lady deviates.

Sometimes, when Swift writes in praise of a particular woman, he suggests some of her admirable qualities by referring explicitly to the absence of their opposites. In his poem "To Mrs. Biddy Floyd," for example, he tells us that Cupid found in her "Truth, Innocence, Good Nature, Look serene," and continues: "From which Ingredients, First the dext'rous Boy/ Pickt the Demure, the Aukward, and the Coy." The Graces gave her

Breeding, and Wit, and Air, and decent Pride;
These Venus cleans'd from ev'ry spurious Grain
Of Nice, Coquet, Affected, Pert, and Vain (4-10).

In "An Epistle to a Lady," he suggests Lady Acheson's virtues in a similar indirect way, by putting into her mouth a speech of self-defence¹ in the form of a series of rhetorical questions. She asks, for example,

Am I spiteful, proud, unjust?
Did I ever break my Trust?
Which, of all our modern Dames
Censures less, or less defames?
In Good Manners, am I faulty?
Can you call me rude, or haughty? (65-70)

But Swift also speaks much more directly of woman's particular virtues and skills. "The First of April: A Poem Inscrib'd to Mrs. E.C." is

Swift's tribute to a woman playing to perfection her role as wife and mother. The "God of Wit and Joke" plays an April Fool trick on the Muses, sending them to take charge of the Cope children:

They peep'd, and saw a Lady there
 Pinning on Coifs and combing Hair;
 Soft'ning with Songs to Son or Daughter,
 The persecution of cold Water.
 Still pleas'd with the good-natur'd Noise,
 And harmless Frolicks of her Boys;
Equal to all in Care and Love,
 Which all deserve and all improve. (29-36)

Continuing to watch the lady busily and wholeheartedly caring for her husband, her family and her home, the goddesses realise that they cannot improve upon her performance and are disconcerted:

"This House don't want, nor will it hold us.
 "We govern here! where she presides
 "With Virtue, Prudence, Wit besides;
 "A Wife as good as Heart cou'd wish one,
 "What need we open our Commission,
 "There's no occasion here for us,
 "Can we do more than what she does." (46-52)

By invention of a fable peopled with pagan deities, Swift has been able without danger of blasphemy to pay Mrs. Cope the compliment of suggesting that even beings from a higher place in the scale of being could not fulfil the human role better than she fulfils it.

We note, however, that Mrs. Cope fulfils her traditional role of wife and mother "with Virtue, Prudence, Wit besides." In "An Epistle to a Lady," Swift's Lady Acheson says to him:

You wou'd teach me to be wise;
 Truth and Honour how to prize;
 How to shine in Conversation,
 And, with Credit fill my Station:
 How to relish Notions high;
 How to live, and how to die. (21-26)²

"With credit" to "fill [her] station," she must be more than a good wife and mother, more than a good hostess perfectly attentive to the physical

needs of her guests, "clear" of look and "smooth" of "stile". Swift challenges her:

Tho' you lead a blameless Life,
Are an humble, prudent Wife;
Answer all domestick Ends,
What is this to us your Friends? (99-102)

Her friends "expect Employment better." Swift admonishes her: "You must learn, if you would gain us,/ With good sense to entertain us." (112-114) Friendship is essentially a relationship between equals, and Swift expects his friend and partner in the human rank to which both belong to make the intellectual effort required to bring her to his own level. Swift's coupling of virtue with wit (good sense, or purposeful use of the mind) as attributes of the admirable woman reminds us, of course, of the other side of his coin: that however strong the forces working against woman and the proper use of her intelligence, she is not excused from the moral responsibility of trying to use it. It reminds us also that to the orthodox Christian the practice of virtue and the attempt to be reasonable are inseparable activities. In the Thomist tradition,³ the distinguishing characteristic of virtuous behavior is its accordance with the distinguishing faculty of human beings, the ability to reason.

But the ideal advocated by any human being, however firmly his principles are grounded in a widely accepted religious and moral code, must to some extent fall short of universality: it is inevitably coloured by personal taste, which in turn is intimately related to personal need. The ideal of behaviour that Swift advocates to his women friends is coloured by his own personality. Furthermore, consideration of what he regards as ideal cannot be separated from consideration of what he loves. Of his own characteristics, two seem to be of special significance in this connection, the intelligence and the fastidiousness that demand corresponding intelligence and fastidiousness in the women he loves or befriends.

When for most women natural intelligence was denied its full scope because of inferior education, an intellectual man must have had difficulty in finding an intellectually compatible woman.⁴ Stella, with her combination of a woman's body and a man's mind, was an exception, and so was Vanessa, in her possession, through education, of the mental calibre usually found only in men.⁵ Swift comments upon the dearth of intellectually adequate girls (again coupling wit with virtue) in "To Lord Harley, since Earl of Oxford, on his Marriage." Swift claims to have thought "A Spirit so inform'd" as Harley's "Could never prosper in amours" (8-9), and to have asked:

Then where . . . shall Harley find
A virgin of superior mind,
With wit and virtue to discover,
And pay the merit of her Lover? (33-56)

"Ca'ndish," like Vanessa, however, was "Born to retrieve her sex's fame," and also like Vanessa, she was helped by Pallas, who

with celestial light
Had purify'd her mortal sight;
Shew'd her the Virtues all combin'd,
Fresh blooming, in young Harley's mind. (49-52)

In this poem, the writer of complimentary verse is at his most complimentary. Nevertheless, Swift's comments suggest that the problem of Harley and others like him is greater than it at first seemed. Unless the man of informed spirit finds a woman of similar endowments, he cannot find a mate at all, for only a woman of informed spirit can recognise his worth. For Swift, in inspiring and keeping love, a woman's wit and virtue are far more important, apparently, than mere physical beauty. He does pay tribute to honest, natural, unaffected beauty, in "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T"; in a graceful compliment, he compares Lady Carteret's beauty to the

Roses of richest Dye, that shone
 With native Lustre like her own;
 Beauty that needs no Aid of Art,
 Thro' ev'ry Sense to reach the Heart. (113-116)

But he has told us in the opening line of the poem that she is "wise as well as fair."

If Swift appears to rate wit in women more highly than most men do, it may be that he elevates a quality to which he responds in the objects of his affection into a desideratum for all women, and that his responsiveness to wit in others is prompted by his own wit. In his exalting of "decency" in the relationship of man and woman, he shows perhaps even more clearly his own predilections. And in the ideal of decency that he presents, he is perhaps on the least sure ground morally, for his own extreme fastidiousness leads him into the very danger he expounds so eloquently, the danger of not accepting the humanity of man. Here we have a paradox, for in enabling him to use scatology with such devastating effectiveness, fastidiousness has provided him with his chief weapon against that danger. Without acute sensibility and a deep capacity for disgust he could not have brought the inescapable facts of mortality into such perfectly placed juxtaposition and vivid contrast with the facts of human presumptuousness. But when he speaks forcefully as a divine and a moralist, he rarely shows squeamishness. There is nothing squeamish about his humour, either, which belongs to a long tradition in which, underlying the scatological and sexual joke there is a strong sense of the contrast between mortal and divine.

Most civilised people, conditioned to cleanliness, would share much of his fastidiousness: Celia, for example, is disgusting by any civilised standards. She may be mortal, she may excrete; but she could at least wash the excretions away from her person, her clothes, and her combs and

towels -- she could at least be clean.⁶ But in "Strephon and Chloe," for example, he exhibits an abnormal degree of fastidiousness and an unrealistic attitude. After having made the point that Chloe is mortal and Strephon is wrong in looking on her as a goddess, he goes further. First he suggests, as we have noted, that the lovers descend below human level, "to the beastly way of thinking," finding "great society in stinking." In the long passage that follows, he goes further still. Not only does he expect the lovers, living together in intimacy, to conceal their natural functions entirely from each other: he suggests that the desire that is part of love cannot survive unless this strict decency is maintained:

Fair Decency, celestial Maid,
Descend from Heav'n to Beauty's Aid;
Though Beauty may beget Desire,
'Tis thou must fan the Lover's Fire;
For, Beauty, like supreme Dominion,
Is best supported by Opinion;
If Decency brings no Supplies,
Opinion falls, and Beauty dies. (219-226)

He has not been talking about a girl's "letting herself go" in appearance and cleanliness after marriage, but about her not hiding the simple needs of bladder and bowel from her husband, when he warns

that Women must be decent;
And, from the Spouse each Blemish hide
More than from all the world beside (252-254).

It is, perhaps, indicative of his phobia that he refers to a natural, healthy function as a blemish. The comment that follows, it seems to me, shows a lack of understanding:

Unjustly all our Nymphs complain,
Their Empire holds so short a Reign;
Is after Marriage lost so soon,
It hardly holds the Honey-moon:
For, if they keep not what they caught,
It is entirely their own Fault.
They take Possession of the Crown,
And then throw all their Weapons down. (255-262)

There seems no reason to suppose that at this point Swift is speaking

through a persona.⁷ If he is indeed speaking with his own voice, in this passage he betrays, perhaps, a surprising failure to recognise that love, as opposed to romantic infatuation, is transcendent at all levels, including the earthiest. A parent is not easily revolted by an infant, and lovers are not easily revolted by each other. Moreover, he does not, apparently, recognise that the unselfconscious behaviour of a Chloe may demonstrate the absence of constraint from her relationship rather than an undue lack of restraint in her:

No Maid at Court is less asham'd
Howe'er for selling Bargains fam'd,
Than she, to name her Parts behind,
Or when a-bed, to let out Wind. (215-218)

In short, he seems to be falling into the trap about which he has given so many warnings: his extreme fastidiousness has betrayed him into shrinking from full acceptance of the whole humanity of man and woman in the relationship of marriage.

Although it is no part of our purpose here to attempt a psychological study of Swift, we cannot help wondering about the two respects in which his ideal woman seems to be an ideal for him rather than for all men, and about the possible connection between them. Perhaps his insistence on the mental and moral qualities of his women friends is the greater because he has channelled all his energies into admiration of these qualities, his physical responses having been inhibited at least to some extent by his perhaps abnormal fastidiousness.

But this is perhaps a minor point, and we in turn fall into the trap of failing to accept Swift's human individuality if we make too much of it.⁸ The poems to Stella, which we shall discuss in a later chapter, leave us in no doubt of his capacity for deep love, in face of which his possible limitations seem trivial. Furthermore, though his personal

idiosyncracies may colour his perception, except in such a rare instance as the one we have just discussed, they do not distort it. At the end of "Strephon and Chloe," Swift's recipe for lasting love between human beings, mortal in body and immortal in soul, suggests the ideal performance of the human role by both the man and the woman, and few people, one imagines, would take exception to it unless they knew of the special implications of "Decency" to Swift:

On Sense and Wit your Passion found,
By Decency cemented round;
Let Prudence with Good Nature strive,
To keep Esteem and Love alive,
Then come old Age whene'er it will,
Your Friendship shall continue still:
And thus a mutual gentle Fire,
Shall never but with Life expire. (307-314)

The love that lasts is the love aroused by the virtue of the beloved, for everything except virtue is subject to the changes of mortality. In "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems," Swift comments:

Now should my Praises owe their Truth
To Beauty, Dress, or Paint, or Youth,
What Stoicks call without our Power,
They could not be insur'd an Hour;
'Twere grafting on an annual Stock,
That must our Expectation mock,
And making one luxuriant Shoot
Die the next Year for want of Root:
Before I could my Verses bring,
Perhaps you're quite another Thing. (61-70)

When Maevius "drain'd his Skull/ To celebrate some Suburb Trull," and

Had gone through all the Common-Places
Worn out by Wits who rhyme on Faces;
Before he could his Poem close,
The lovely Nymph had lost her Nose. (75-78)

Making the association, by his selection of this example, between moral disorder, the praisers of beauty, and the women praised, Swift gives greater force to his praise of Stella: "Your Virtues safely I commend,/ They on no Accidents depend;" and by the ironic contrast implied in

"Virtues" and "Accidents", he also completes his indictment of the values of Maevius and his trull.

Love founded on virtue is characterised by its balance, its wholeness, its reflection of the harmony and completeness of God's design, and God, indeed, is its source. At the beginning of "Cadenus and Vanessa," Swift defines the love of which "antient Poets sing": it is

A Fire celestial, chaste, refin'd,
Conceiv'd and kindled in the Mind,
Which having found an equal Flame,
Unites, and both become the same,
In different Breasts together burn,
Together both to Ashes turn. (29-34)⁹

But it is at the end of the first of his "Verses to Vanessa" that Swift makes perhaps his most telling comment upon love founded on virtue:

The strongest Reason will submit
To Virtue, --Honor, Sense, and Wit.
To such a Nymph the Wise and Good
Cannot be faithless if they wou'd:
For Vices all have diff'rent Ends,
But Virtue still to Virtue tends. (7-12)

In this passage, we discover the full significance of "Virtue" as Swift the orthodox Christian uses the word: Virtue is the embodiment of God Himself. The word denotes the God of goodness, permeating the whole chain of creation and manifesting Himself in His creatures; and it also denotes the Idea of the Good, towards which all the manifestations must gravitate and with which all must be united, as the waters of a river are united with those of the sea. The rest follows. Reason in the lover must submit to Virtue in the beloved, for Virtue in human beings is by definition reasonable, characterised by "Honor, Sense, and Wit." Virtue is the very principle that keeps the order in a state of equilibrium, and the lovers of the virtue manifested in virtuous women, putting themselves in harmony with that order, are enabled at once to participate in it and be sustained

by it. All else is chaos, "For Vices all have diff'rent Ends." But "Virtue still to Virtue tends."

In concluding our discussion of Swift's concept of woman's role, we must comment upon the importance of the three women who have figured so largely in it. The poems about Stella, Vanessa, and Lady Acheson are important not only because of their number or length, but also because in his relationships with these women, as he records them, he so frequently assumes the role of tutor. Although discussion of Swift's tutorial role belongs to the next chapter, at this point it is relevant to mention one aspect of it. Not only does he offer guidance to his women friends: he also voices a tutor's approval and praise of the qualities he finds already developed in his pupils. Furthermore, he rarely seems to forget his wider audience, the women who may learn from their examples. Lady Acheson was a disappointing pupil. Swift's portraits of Stella and Vanessa, however, may be considered as in some respects models for their sex to follow.

Most of the poetry about Stella and Vanessa was made public by Swift himself, to a limited group of friends by private circulation, and to an unrestricted audience by publication in his lifetime. Most of the poems to Stella, for example, appeared in the last volume of the Pope-Swift Miscellanies, in 1727. "Cadenus and Vanessa," certainly, may have become public in the first place against his intentions, but he accepted and made the best of the fait accompli. He wrote to Knightley Chetwode from London on 17 April, 1726, "I am very indifferent what is done with it, for printing cannot make it more common than it is."¹⁰ As Williams points out, it was actually at the time he was writing this letter that "the poem found its way into print" (p. 685), and shortly afterwards, Swift himself

included it in the Miscellanies of 1727. What he says of Stella and Vanessa in the published poems, then, may be taken as part of the instruction that as a teacher he made it his business to impart to all women and men who would read it.

Indeed, he tells us in so many words that, in embodying the virtues, Stella and Vanessa embody an ideal for all women to emulate. In the fable of "Cadenus and Vanessa," Vanessa is literally "A Model for her Sex design'd" (866). She is modest, intelligent, wise, and above all an apt pupil:

Her Knowledge with her Fancy grew;
She hourly press'd for something new;
Ideas came into her Mind
So fast, his Lessons lagg'd behind. (554-557)

In her dealings with others, she fills admirably her place in the order to which she belongs. Not only does she regard with "distain" and "rage" the false values of the trivial and vicious-minded;

With pleasing Arts she could reduce
Mens Talents to their proper Use;
And with Address each Genius held
To that wherein it most excell'd;
Thus making others Wisdom known,
Cou'd please them, and improve her own. (448-453)

We are reminded that "Virtue still to Virtue tends."

Swift tells us most explicitly that Stella, too, is a model to be emulated, in "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness." In the opening lines of the poem he takes up and adapts the conceit he used in "Cadenus and Vanessa:"

Pallas observing Stella's Wit
Was more than for her Sex was fit;
And that her Beauty, soon or late,
Might breed Confusion in the State,
In high Concern for human Kind,
Fixt Honour in her Infant Mind. (1-6)

His definition of honour is significant:

It answers Faith in Things divine.
 As nat'ral Life the Body warms,
 And, Scholars teach, the Soul informs;
 So Honour animates the Whole,
 And is the Spirit of the Soul.

Those num'rous Virtues which the Tribe
 Of tedious Moralists describe,
 And by such various Titles call,
 True Honour comprehends them all. (10-18)

Yet again we are reminded of the wholeness of virtue, of the harmony of the divine order to which the virtuous human being conforms and of which he partakes. And of the honour that comprehends all the virtues, Swift says, "Let Stella's fair Example preach/ A Lesson she alone can teach" (33-34). Not only is Stella a model for those who would understand their duty to God; she is a model for those who would understand their duty to their fellow men. In the relationship of friendship, the perfect balance between two human beings in their place in the divine order, she is "Best Pattern of true Friends" (117). It is no matter for wonder that the woman held up by a Christian poet for emulation should be one who lives by the two great commandments of the Sermon on the Mount.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

¹Parts of the speech are ironic, perhaps. See pages 202-203 below.

²"Epistle to a Lady."

³Professor Robert H. Bowers has drawn my attention to "the Franciscan emphasis on will power to activate the reasonable."

⁴This problem, as Professor Aubrey Williams has reminded me, was "a basic preoccupation of Restoration comedy." Millamant was a match (in both senses) for Mirabell, Angelica for Valentine.

⁵As Fischer points out, in her correspondence Esther Vanhomrigh has left ample evidence of her high intelligence. He quotes her letter to Swift (Correspondence, II, 362-363), which concludes: "Therefore don't flatter yourself that separation will ever change my sentiments, for I find myself unquiet in the midst of silence, and my heart is at once pierced with sorrow and love." He comments, "But passion so well worded as this argues for a cool head as well as for a warm heart, and particularly the carefully constructed final sentence of this passage persuades me that Esther understood the use of the blunt as well as the sharp end of her stylus." (Fischer, "The Echoic Poetry of Jonathan Swift," p. 49. See also p. 69, n. 11.)

⁶"The Lady's Dressing Room."

⁷Greene takes a different view. He thinks that the advice about decency (219-292) is ironic and that what he later calls the "excessive sensibility, or rather egotism" of Strephon is being derided. (Greene, pp. 679-683) The theory is plausible, but breaks down, I think, when we try to find the point at which the speaker's point of view changes. The final reference to decency (308) is clearly not ironic.

⁸Comments by Kathleen Williams, at the beginning of her Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958), serve as a timely warning against trying to force Swift "into a consistency which properly belongs only to the creatures of our imagination" (1). She also observes that "Swift's writings, like most of our greatest literature, make much use of subconscious material, and great writers, though probably no more odd than the rest of us, leave more evidence of their oddity to posterity than most people would disclose outside the analyst's consulting room." (3)

⁹Cf. page 23 above, n. 37.

¹⁰Correspondence, III, 305-306.

II THE PERFORMANCE OF SWIFT

CHAPTER 4 TUTOR AND COURTIER

On the stage of the world, Swift's roles as he apparently saw them were all variants of his main human role as moralist. In his own eyes, perhaps, the most important of these secondary roles was political, and it was not only ambition that made him wish passionately for advancement. He seems to have believed that by virtue of his great and God-given talents he was eminently fitted to hold the high office in which those gifts could find their fullest scope and expression. There is evidence, throughout all but the earliest works, of his deep disappointment at never having risen to high place in England, and of his conviction that his most glorious years were those in which he came nearest to achieving his ambition, the last four years of Queen Anne, the administration of Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. In the poems about women, most of which are concerned with private relationships rather than public, most of our glimpses of Swift the politician are incidental. In "An Epistle to a Lady," however, we see him in the role of political poet. His hopes for advancement in England long dead, but his political commitment and concern undiminished, his role must be that of satirist. In his dealings with scoundrels in power, he claims (as in his dealings with Lady Acheson, whom he addresses), his "Method of Reforming,/ Is by laughing, not by storming" (229-230). In some of the earlier poems, we see him acting, if not as a politician, at least as a diplomat in his address to ladies of influential background. But in his personal relationships with women,

the role of Swift the moralist was most often that of tutor.¹ Conscious as he was that men, with their greater advantages, must inevitably be the pattern-setters, he readily assumed the duties of teaching his women friends how to live in harmony with right order: they could too easily, he saw, adapt themselves to the patterns set by the deviants -- the beaux and the exalters and debasers of women. Sometimes he taught by laughter, and sometimes he used the methods of a courtier. On the stage of the world as we see it through the poems, we also see Swift in the role of lover. He is lover and moralist simultaneously; for him, love must be founded on "wit and virtue."

Distinct from the roles he lived are those he deliberately adopted for poetic purposes--or refrained from adopting. Swift the man took it upon himself to instruct his young women friends; but in "Cadenus and Vanessa," he casts himself explicitly and literally in the part of tutor. Consistently in the poems to Stella he reveals himself as a lover; but hardly ever does he adopt the stance of a lover. For the most part, any attempt to distinguish the assumed roles from the natural proves futile, however. Although we can, obviously, separate from the rest the poems in which he tells us in so many words that he is undertaking a role, it is impossible to say, when such specific statements are wanting, whether he is assuming a character or persona or simply revealing an already existing aspect of himself.² Furthermore, when he does make such statements, we cannot always tell to what degree they are metaphorical: if he directed Esther Vanhomrigh's reading, how far, we wonder, did that fact in itself make him literally her tutor? The attempt to make such distinctions, however, does serve a purpose. In revealing the virtual impossibility of the task, it reinforces our argument, suggesting that because Swift sees

life as a drama, whatever he says of his function in life sounds like the description of a role, whether he has been deliberately assuming such a role, or merely writing literally about life as, to his eyes, it is. For him, the world stage imagery apparently has metaphorical and literal truth. In a later chapter we shall be examining the devices Swift uses in presenting himself as a character in the drama; but in our discussion of the roles themselves, we shall be concerned with his world-view, his habitual patterns of perception, not merely with a device.

Although there is little to be added to what we have already said about the lessons that Swift the tutor gives, much remains to be said about his teaching methods. In each relationship, naturally, they are different, adapted to the circumstances and to the needs of the woman he teaches. He believed, apparently, that he could teach Lady Acheson best by laughter. According to "An Epistle to a Lady," in which he writes as laughing satirist, he also believed that it was for teaching by laughter that his own talents best fitted him. The "Heroick Strain" is not for him. "From the Planet of my Birth," he claims, "I encounter Vice with Mirth" (141-142). He believes, like Horace, that "Ridicule has greater pow'r/ To reform the World, than Sour," and that people, like horses, are guided better by "Switches . . . than Cudgels":

Bastings heavy, dry, obtuse
Only Dulness can produce.
While a little gentle Jerking
Sets the Spirits all a working. (199-206)

Nettling Lady Acheson "with Raillery," setting her "thoughts upon their Mettle," he tells her,

Gives Imagination Scope,
Never lets your Mind elope:
Drives out Brangling, and Contention,
Brings in Reason and Invention. (211-216)

Laughing at his pupil's faults, he suggests, is far more beneficial to her than quoting "Texts from Plutarch's Morals," or producing from Solomon "Maxims teaching Wisdom's Use" (233-238). His raillery may make her smart, briefly; but he must be delighted when he finds

the tingling Pain,
 Ent'ring warm your frigid Brain
 Make you able upon Sight,
 To decide of Wrong and Right?
 Talk with Sense, whate'er you please on,
 Learn to relish Truth and Reason. (267-272)

We have noticed several examples of Swift's attempts to teach Lady Acheson by teasing (in "Revolution at Market-Hill," for example). We notice also, however, that he was often unsuccessful as a tutor to her. The most obvious evidence of his failure is found in "To Daphne," in which he describes vividly and dramatically his struggles with a recalcitrant pupil. She is perverse, vexing him on purpose, inviting his contempt. Describing her pleasure in frustrating him, he uses "delight" three times in forty-six lines. She loves to argue, is always wrong, but never admits it; "with cavils combats reason" (12); is dogmatic; never listens; is most opinionated about the things of which she knows least, and silliest and most peevish about the things of which she knows most; she is angriest "when she knows she's most to blame." She smiles as she resists. If she ever improves, he asserts, it will be for spite: her would-be-reformer must "advise her wrong;/ And reprove her when she's right" (37-38), contriving "Into contradiction [to] warm her" (33). But second thoughts suggest that even this plan will fail, for she is too cunning. She pre-
fers error:

Nature holds her forth two mirrors,
 One for truth, and one for errors:
 That looks hideous, fierce, and frightful;
 This is flatt'ring, and delightful;
 That she throws away as foul;
 Sits by this, to dress her soul. (43-48)

In "Twelve Articles," generally regarded as a sequel to "Daphne" or part of it,³ he speaks even more specifically about the shortcomings of his pupil, and in doing so he reveals as much about the tutor as about his charge. It seems that in his dealings with Lady Acheson he could not always act in accordance with his belief, born of experience, that teaching is better effected by teasing than by anger, although he claims in "Epistle to a Lady," to have found "by Experiment," that "Scolding moves [her] less than Merriment," and that his vain storming and raging "but stupify [her] Brain" (208-210). The picture of Lady Acheson that emerges, particularly from "Twelve Articles," suggests that perhaps she was not as intelligent as he thought or wished she was, and that he expected too much of her. She evidently stumbled as she read aloud. She was not convinced by reason, she stuck to paradoxes, was inattentive, said absurd things, became angry as she argued wrong. She failed to understand his jokes, but pretended she understood them and resented his explanation of them. She did not appreciate his writings. She was forgetful, and fretful when he played tutor. She blundered on and on as he "thundered" at her. She showed "poverty of spirit,/ And in dress place[d] all her merit." She gave herself "ten thousand airs," with what seems to an observer an almost pathetic failure to see their futility to move her stern preceptor. She rejected his advice, which, apparently, he gave unasked. His attitude towards her may to some extent be explained, however, by the circumstances in which he played tutor to her.

During Swift's visit to England in 1726, he received news of the serious deterioration of Stella's health. In a letter to John Worrall on July 15, his distress bursts the bounds of his usual reticence, and he reveals the almost panic-stricken horror which overwhelms him at the anticipation of her death and impels him to fly from it. He asks Worrall,

if he thinks Stella cannot live until his return, to apply for renewal of his license to be absent from the Deanery "for another half year, which time I will spend in some Retirement far from London till I can be in a Disposition of appearing after an Accident that must be so fatal to my Quiet."⁴ He feels even less capable of returning to Ireland in time to face the dread event: "I would not for the Universe be present at Such a Tryal of seeing her depart. . . . I am determined not to go to Ireland to find her just dead or dying."⁵ He asks Worrall in a letter on August 6th to prevent his return even at the last moment, by sending a letter to him at Chester if it is too late to notify him of Stella's death before he leaves London. His plea to be prevented is clear, although in the letter he stresses other aspects of the situation. In a letter to James Stopford on July 20, there is a particularly significant passage:

I think there is not a greater folly than that of entering into too strict and particular a friendship, with the loss of which a man must be absolutely miserable; but especially at an age when it is too late to engage in a new friendship. Besides, this was a person of my own rearing and instruction, from childhood, who excelled in every good quality that can possibly accomplish a human creature . . . Dear Jim, pardon me, I know not what I am saying; but believe me that violent friendship is much more lasting, and as much engaging, as violent love.⁶

He tells Stopford, too, that "If this accident should happen before I set out, I believe I shall stay this winter in England; where it will be at least easier to find some repose, than upon the spot."⁷

Although Stella recovered, she became desperately ill once more during Swift's final visit to England in 1727, and once more, in letters to Sheridan and Worrall,⁸ he repeats his intention of staying away from Ireland if she should die before his return. In the event, Stella did not die until the end of January, 1728, several months after Swift's return to Ireland. We know little of the circumstances, except that Swift

himself was ill and did not attend her funeral.

He went to Market Hill in June, 1728, and did not depart until the following February. It was probably in the autumn of 1728 that he wrote "Lady A-S-N Weary of the Dean." The beginning of the poem seems particularly revealing:

The Dean wou'd visit Market-Hill,
Our Invitation was but slight
I said-why-Let him if he will,
And so I bid Sir A -- r write.

His Manners would not let him wait,
Least we should think ourselves neglected,
And so we saw him at our Gate
Three Days before he was expected.

After a Week, a Month, a Quarter,
And Day succeeding after Day,
Says not a Word of his Departure
Tho' not a Soul would have him stay.

I've said enough to make him blush
Methinks, or else the Devil's in't,
But he cares not for it a Rush,
Nor for my Life will take the Hint. (1-16)

It seems reasonable to suppose that this poem is more than the mere joke it appears to be. Perhaps Swift is disarming his hosts, preventing criticism of his long stay by anticipating it, or possibly he is testing his welcome by exaggerating the signs of weariness that the Achesons have already betrayed. But perhaps he is getting his own doubts out of his system. Perhaps he knows that he ought to leave, but cannot yet face Dublin again having once come away. In short, perhaps Market Hill was the refuge that he substituted for England, Wales, France, the places we learn from the correspondence that he had planned to retire to on Stella's death when he anticipated it in 1726 and 1727.

In the light of this supposition, his relationship with Lady Acheson takes on new significance. In her perhaps he hoped he had found, not a

substitute for Stella, but at least a woman who might by partially fulfilling Stella's role enable him to adjust himself to the void that she had left. Perhaps it was not, after all, "Too late to engage in a new Friendship," even if it was the palest of imitations. This would account for the apparent violence of his frustration when Lady Acheson proved such an unsatisfactory pupil. It might also account for his constant nettling of her (notably in "Death and Daphne" and "My Lady's Lamentation") about her thinness, and her refusal to eat sensibly and take fresh air and exercise. He had treated Stella in a similar way.⁹ We know from The Journal to Stella that as early as 1710 he was repeatedly admonishing her to take the air, to walk and to ride. In some of the poems--"Stella at Wood-Park," for instance, and "A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth"--he urges her to eat by teasing her about her poor appetite. Writing to Sheridan on August 29, 1727, during her illness, he speaks of the confirmation given to him by a doctor friend (Arbuthnot?) of his own belief in "Air, and Exercise" in the treatment of her particular disability.¹⁰ It is no wonder that he nags Lady Acheson so relentlessly if he sees in her the symptoms that he has had such reason to fear, and observes her reluctance to live in a way that might make her stronger.

Be all this as it may. We must not forget, however, that regard or affection for a woman almost always prompted Swift to play tutor to her, and that at the time of the Market Hill visits he had long had the reputation for chastening those he loved. Writing to Swift on October 12, 1728, Pope reports having heard

that you are still at Sir Acheson's, planting and building; two things that I envy you for, besides a third, which is the society of a valuable Lady: I conclude (tho' I know nothing of it) that you quarrel with her, and abuse her every day, if she is so. I wonder I hear of no Lampoons upon her, either made by yourself, or by others because you esteem her.¹¹

In Swift's reply, the tone in which he writes of his pupil and his own

behaviour matches Pope's in lightness. We may detect a trace of self-consciousness, too. The lady

is perfectly well bred, and desirous to improve her understanding, which is very good, but cultivated too much like a fine Lady. She was my pupil there, and severely chid when she read wrong; with that, and walking and making twenty little amusing improvements, and writing family verses of mirth by way of libels on my Lady, my Time past very well and in very great order.¹²

In spite of the restiveness that, according to Swift, Lady Acheson showed under his formidable instruction, the friendship did survive. John Boyle, fifth Earl of Orrery, who is first mentioned as an acquaintance by Swift in 1732,¹³ relates the following anecdote:

Swift, soon after our acquaintance, introduced me to Lady Acheson, as to one of his female favourites. I had scarce been half an hour in her company, before she asked me, if I had seen the poems upon "Death and Daphne". As I told her I had not, she immediately unlocked a cabinet, and bringing out the manuscript, read it to me with a seeming satisfaction, of which, at the time, I doubted the sincerity. While she was reading, the Dean was perpetually correcting her for bad pronunciation, and for placing a wrong emphasis upon particular words. As soon as she had gone through the composition, she assured me smilingly that the portrait of Daphne was drawn for herself: I begged to be excused from believing it, and protested that I could not see one feature that had the least resemblance, but the Dean immediately burst into a fit of laughter. "You fancy," says he, "that you are very polite, but you are much mistaken. That Lady had rather be a DAPHNE drawn by me, than a SACHARISSA by any other pencil."¹⁴

If Lady Acheson's regard for Swift weathered the rigours of his discipline, it was partly, perhaps, because he did sometimes remember that teasing did his pupil more good than anger. It may also have been because she was flattered to be the object of a great man's attentions, even when he scolded. And perhaps she did after all have some understanding of her tutor, and knew that his scolding was a sign of his real concern for her welfare.

Nearly twenty years before he played tutor to Lady Acheson, Swift

addressed himself to a pupil whose needs were somewhat different. In "Cadenus and Vanessa," the poem in which he speaks most explicitly of himself as a tutor, his methods of guiding Vanessa are almost entirely those of a courtier. In this poem the distinction between the roles he lived and the roles he played is to some extent obvious. In the world of real life, his role as he sees it seems to be that of mentor. His aim at the time he composed the earliest version of the poem, whether or not his attitude towards the real Vanessa changed in later years, was apparently to discourage her passion for him without hurting her more than he could help. By writing the poem, he shows a mentor's concern for the pupil he has unintentionally misled and a mentor's desire to re-educate her. In the poem itself, however, he seeks to persuade her less by direct instruction than by the most delicate and beguiling of flattery, adopting the strategy of a courtier. But he does so by means of a fable in which he presents himself as literally her schoolmaster, "fix'd on" by "Pallas, once Vanessa's Tutor" as "her Coadjutor" (464-465). In spite of the obvious allegory, we find ourselves accepting the collaboration between Pallas and Cadenus literally, because, in the world of the fable, the immortals and the mortals are not differentiated as characters: they have the same kind of reality. By invention of the fable, Swift not only conceals the art by which he is really trying to persuade Vanessa, but also contrives to exclude from our consideration almost all other aspects of the relationship than that of teacher and pupil, and to subordinate if not entirely to explain away the love relationship. We forget that the real-life Vanessa was simply an intelligent girl who pleased Swift and who developed a passion for him. And we forget for much of the time that Swift was anything other than the dedicated schoolmaster, his world

dominated and circumscribed by his pedagogic duties.

From the fable we learn something of Swift's notion of such duties. Cadenus's function is to cultivate his pupil's judgment by guiding her reading. Entering the world, Vanessa was armed, "Well knowing from the Books she read/ What dangerous Paths young Virgins tread" (310-311). Her tutor tries to prevent her natural susceptibility to love from tricking her into a relationship in which reason and morality have no part: he wards off Cupid's darts,

placing still some Book betwixt,
The Darts were in the Cover fix'd,
Or often blunted and recoil'd
On Plutarch's Morals struck, were spoil'd (480-485).

The emphasis of all his teaching is moral. Vanessa reminds him of his precepts "That Virtue, pleas'd by being shown/ Knows nothing which it dare not own," and "That common Forms were not design'd/ Directors to a noble Mind" (608-609, 612-613).¹⁵

But we cannot go far in our attempt to isolate a general idea of a tutor and his function in this poem, for Swift in portraying Cadenus is concerned with the examination of a particular relationship between a particular tutor and a particular pupil, and the rest of what he says about the tutor must be considered in the light of his message to the real Vanessa.

From the outset it is clear that Swift is employing the tactics of a courtier in his address to her. By the very terms of the fable he exalts Vanessa: as an infant, she has been singled out for special attention by one goddess, and she has become the special charge of another. She herself is given immortal physical attributes. Venus

plucks in Heav'n's high Bow'rs
A Sprig of Amaranthine Flow'rs,
In Nectar thrice infuses Bays,

Three times refin'd in Titan's Rays:
 Then calls the Graces to her Aid,
 And sprinkles thrice the new-born Maid.
 From whence the tender Skin assumes
 A Sweetness above all Perfumes;
 From whence a Cleanliness remains,
 Incapable of outward Stains. (154-163)

From this anointing, too, proceeds "that Decency of Mind,/ So lovely in the Female Kind." Later, Swift even suggests that she is less subject than Cadenus to mortal decay:

As Years increase, she brighter shines,
Cadenus with each Day declines,
 And he must fall a Prey to Time,
 While she continues in her Prime. (536-539)

Later still, when Cadenus tells her he cannot return her feelings for him, he offers to redeem his want of passion

With Gratitude, Respect, Esteem:
 With that Devotion we bestow,
 When Goddesses appear below (787-789).

When we remember what Swift implies elsewhere and so often about the impiety and folly of regarding women as goddesses, we are all the more strongly aware that on this occasion he is attributing such an attitude to Cadenus for a particular purpose. The first half of the poem is one long, graceful compliment to a super-human Vanessa. Even her weaknesses are given a flattering interpretation, and described as the gift of a goddess, so that she is not responsible for them. Pallas, knowing that

in our degen'rate Days
 Bare Virtue could not live on Praise,
 That Meat must be with Money bought,

"infus'd" into the infant's mind "Some small Regard for State and Wealth," with the result that although the adult Vanessa managed her estate prudently, she nevertheless "lik'd Three Footmen to her Chair" (211-221). It is because Vanessa is superior to all other women that she will be universally beloved, according to Venus's expectations and plans. And

when Pallas observes that Venus's premisses are erroneous, and says to Venus, "Know'st thou not yet that Men commence/ Thy Votaries, for Want of Sense," she comments that Vanessa herself, in her superiority, will prove the greatest enemy of Venus's scheme. Thus Swift redoubles the flattery.

When, half way through the poem, the character of Cadenus is introduced, he is made to contribute to the exaltation of Vanessa by self-abasement. First from outside the character, Swift has Cupid say of Cadenus as the designated object of Vanessa's affections:

She need no Rivals apprehend.
Her Sex, with universal Voice,
Must laugh at her capricious Choice. (507-509)

Swift exaggerates Cadenus's decrepitude: Vanessa

Imaginary Charms can find,
In Eyes with Reading almost blind;
Cadenus now no more appears
Declin'd in Health, advanc'd in Years (526-529).

As narrator, Swift asks:

What Mariner is not afraid,
To venture in a Ship decay'd?
What Planter will attempt to yoke
A Sapling with a falling Oak? (532-535)

When Swift admits us to Cadenus's mind, he makes him assert not only that he cannot understand "what was Love," but also that he has never understood, and that the powers he has lost were mere matters of "common forms"; he

Had sigh'd and languish'd, vow'd, and writ,
For Pastime, or to shew his Wit;
But Time, and Books, and State Affairs
Had spoil'd his fashionable Airs. (540-545)

Cadenus at first modestly assumes the reason for Vanessa's distraction is that he has demanded too much of his pupil, and he apologises to her:

If he was bolder than became
A Scholar to a Courtly Dame,
She might excuse a Man of Letters;
Thus Tutors often treat their Betters. (588-591)

When she tells him directly of her feelings, he feels "Shame" and "Guilt" as well as disappointment and surprise. He is incredulous, and Swift once more exaggerates Cadenus's inadequacy as he says he cannot believe his "declining Age" could "Vanessa's earliest Thoughts engage" (636-637), and, as he had been so completely unconscious of her female charms that "He hardly knew, 'till he was told,/ Whether the Nymph were Young or Old" (631-632), "His Person must Contempt beget" (639). In answering her, he "faulter'd ev'ry Word he spoke" (657). He succumbs to pride at the thought of being

Preferr'd before a Crowd of Beaux,
So bright a Nymph to come unsought,
Such Wonder by his Merit wrought (751-753).

Swift further abases Cadenus by making him choose "to justify his Pride" (763), and then to earn his pupil's rebuke by addressing her as a goddess, using the "lofty style . . . / Which he had taught her to despise" (796-797). When her tutor has stooped to "affect"¹⁶

Devotion, Duty, and Respect,
He fairly abdicates his Throne,
The Government is now her own (798-801).

By this last exercise of courtiership, Swift prepares for a switch of the roles within the poem: "The Nymph will have her turn, to be/ The Tutor; and the Pupil, he." (806-807) Even as a pupil, Cadenus is inferior to Vanessa:

she already can discern
Her Scholar is not apt to learn;
Or wants Capacity to reach
The Science she designs to teach:
Wherein his Genius was below
The Skill of ev'ry common Beau. (808-813)

Although the concluding lines of this section of the poem are ambiguous, one of the possible interpretations of them is that they represent a final courtier-like gesture.

But what Success Vanessa met,
 Is to the World a Secret yet:
 Whether the Nymph, to please her Swain,
 Talks in a high Romantick Strain;
 Or whether he at last descends
 To like with less Seraphick Ends;
 Or, to compound the Business, whether
 They temper Love and Books together;
 Must never to Mankind be told,
 Nor shall the conscious Muse unfold. (818-827)

In leaving open the possibility that the fictional Cadenus did eventually succumb (with all that this implies about the real Cadenus), Swift certainly makes the reader wonder for a moment whether his intention was indeed to discourage Vanessa's advances. Much depends upon when these lines were written, and this we do not know. If they were written, not in 1713, but at a later stage in Swift's friendship with Vanessa, it is possible that they represent a change in his attitude towards her, a change that, on the evidence of his surviving correspondence with her,¹⁷ may well have happened. But whatever the biographical facts, the literary one remains that the lines are included in the version printed in Miscellanies of 1727, which Swift himself authorised for publication. Presumably he regarded them as an integral part of the poem. It is possible that he was deliberately titillating the curiosity of his readers, regardless of Vanessa's reputation and his own, but such behaviour would surely be out of character. It is more likely that his attitude to Vanessa throughout the poem is consistent and that in these lines, too, he is treating her with courtier-like consideration. In this case, although trying to discourage her, he is avoiding the crudity of outright rejection, and offering a salve to her pride. If she has not succeeded in moving Cadenus to love her, she is at least left with the comfort that within the fable of the poem the compliment is sustained to the end.

Two aspects of Swift's practice of the courtly arts in this poem

remain to be mentioned. We observe that he describes the relationship between Cadenus and Vanessa without casting even the faintest shadow of blame on Vanessa. And we observe that there is yet another twist in the pattern: not only does he flatter Vanessa directly, both by elevating her and by depressing Cadenus, thus widening the gap between them; he praises Cadenus as well as depreciating him. The praise of Cadenus reflects not only on Swift but also on Vanessa herself, who chose him, and thus it can be taken as an indirect courtly gesture towards her.

Swift's use of flattery to instruct Vanessa seems entirely appropriate to her needs and to the situation. Given her temperament and the delicate relationship in which he found himself with her, the teasing methods of teaching he employed later in his dealings with Lady Acheson would have been at best out of place, and at worst destructive of a friendship that Swift apparently wished to preserve on his own terms. As for Lady Acheson, if we can take at their face value the sentiments Swift attributes to her, his refusal to play courtier to her was a continual source of disappointment. He seems to have thought that flattery would be bad for her¹⁸ and for others like her, and he as good as told her so when she was foolish enough to ask for complimentary treatment. We have already seen, in "Epistle to a Lady," his reaction to her desire to be addressed in verses in the grand manner. At the end of "My Lady's Lamentation," he has her conclude her complaint about being treated all the time by Swift as a pupil with an appeal to Dr. Jenny and other clerical friends to come to her rescue,

No 'Squire to be found
The neighbourhood round,
(For, under the rose,
I would rather chuse those) (211-214).

And in "A Panegyrick on the Dean," he puts into her mouth ironic praise

of the courtier-like attitude towards her that is to her mind so lamentably lacking in him:

With Ladies what a strict Decorum!
 With what Devotion you adore 'um!
 Treat me with so much Complaisance,
 As fits a Princess in Romance.
 By your Example and Assistance,
 The Fellows learn to know their Distance.
 Sir A - - r, since you set the Pattern,
 No longer calls me Snipe and Slattern;
 Nor dares he, though he were a Duke,
 Offend me with the least Rebuke. (51-60)

But when she asks him to write not a panegyric but a satire, "The Journal of a Modern Dame," he responds with ironic praise of women, asking her in mock dismay

How cou'd it come into your Mind,
 To pitch on me, of all Mankind,
 Against the Sex to write a Satyre,
 And brand me for a Woman-Hater?
 On me, who think them all so fair,
 They rival Venus to a Hair;
 Their Virtues never ceased to sing,
 Since first I learn'd to tune a String.¹⁹

His answer to the ladies, whom he imagines bewailing the loss of their "only Friend," is a parody of courtly verse, and the joke is heightened by the pretended omission of "several Verses," verses so stereotyped, presumably, that they can be taken as read:

Ah lovely Nymphs, remove your Fears,
 No more let fall those precious Tears.
 Sooner shall, etc.
 [Here several verses are omitted.]
 The Hound be hunted by the Hare,
 Than I turn Rebel to the Fair. (17-21)

Swift's final mock-concession to the convention of playing courtier to women comes in the almost Chaucerian trick of rhetoric he employs in the last lines of his introduction:

I but transcribe, for not a Line
 Of all the Satyre shall be mine.
 Compell'd by you to tag in Rhimes

The common Slanders of the Times,
 Of modern Times, the Guilt is yours,
 And me my Innocence secures,
 Unwilling Muse begin thy Lay,
 The Annals of a Female Day. (28-35)

Swift's primary concern in addressing his women friends is not always tutorial, however, and his skill in adapting method and tone to his subject, in choosing the right costume for the part, is apparent also in the poems in which he is simply out to please. In "Psyche", he compliments Mrs. Sican, whom he describes in his footnote to the poem as "a very ingenious well bred Lady, wife to Mr. John Sican, an eminent Grocer in Dublin." Williams, in his headnote to "Psyche", quotes two references to Mrs. Sican from Swift's correspondence with Pope, from which it appears that he admires her taste, judgment, and wide reading, though not her poetry, and that on one occasion she sent him, anonymously, birthday verses and a piece of sturgeon. The diction of "Psyche" is entirely appropriate for the celebration of a comfortable, undemanding, domestic kind of friendship with a woman whose social position called for no recognition in the tribute:

At two Afternoon for our Psyche inquire,
 Her Tea-Kettle's on, and her Smock at the Fire:
 So loitring, so active; so busy, so idle,
 Which hath she most need of, a Spur or a Bridle?
 Thus, a Greyhound out-runs the whole Pack in a Race,
 Yet would rather be hang'd than he'd leave a warm Place.
 She gives you such Plenty, it puts you in Pain;
 But ever with Prudence takes Care of the Main.
 To please you, she knows how to chuse a nice Bit:
 For her Taste is almost as refin'd as her Wit.
 To oblige a good Friend, she will trace ev'ry Market,
 It would do your Heart Good, to see how she will cark it. (1-12)

Having thus teased Mrs. Sican and acknowledged her practical kindness to him, Swift closes the poem with a compliment to her on the qualities for which, presumably, she would wish most to be admired by him. The appropriate homeliness of tone is sustained, but the compliment itself is

courtly: "Yet beware of her Arts, for it plainly appears,/ She saves
Half her Victuals, by feeding your Ears." (13-14) As Swift's correspondence shows, he continued to play the courtier all his life in his relationships with his many women friends and acquaintances, but "Psyche" (probably written in 1730) seems to be his last complimentary-address in verse.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 4

¹Fischer comments "As it is well enough known, Swift's penchant for reforming female manners amounted to something very like a life-long avocation." ("The Echoic Poetry of Jonathan Swift," p. 47)

²Nor can we ever be entirely sure that we have stripped away the last layer of irony, or that even when common sense tells us we have reached the poet himself we have in fact done so.

³See Williams, p. 906, headnote.

⁴Correspondence, III, 141.

⁵Correspondence, III, 151-152.

⁶Correspondence, III, 145.

⁷Correspondence, III, 145-146.

⁸August 29 and September 12. Correspondence, III, 234 and 238.

⁹Perhaps this is not as significant as it seems. "No question oftener recurred to his acquaintances of either sex, than this. Why do not you exercise? Why do not you exercise?" (Delany, pp. 174-175)

¹⁰Correspondence, III, 234.

¹¹Correspondence, III, 303, and n. 1. Williams assumes that Pope's disclaimer of knowledge is ironic and that he had an actual poem in mind, probably "My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean. July 28, 1728."

¹²Correspondence, III, 311.

¹³Swift to Charles Ford, October 14, 1732. Correspondence, IV, 77.

¹⁴Orrery, Remarks, pp. 81-82.

¹⁵But note the comments of Fisher, Ohlin and Tyne upon Vanessa and her arguments.

¹⁶The underlining is mine.

¹⁷See Correspondence, II. See also Fisher's analysis of the relationship ("The Echoic Poetry of Jonathan Swift," pp. 47-53), and Vanessa and Her Correspondence with Jonathan Swift, ed. A. Martin Freeman (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921).

¹⁸See "To Daphne," 43-48, quoted on pages 91-92 above.

¹⁹"The Journal of a Modern Lady," 5-12.

III
THE PERFORMANCE OF SWIFT

CHAPTER 5
COURTIER AND TUTOR

When Swift employs on his own behalf the flattering or persuasive arts that we have seen him use or refrain from using when playing tutor, he steps firmly into the role of courtier, concerned primarily to protect or advance his own reputation and prestige. In "Cadenus and Vanessa," he uses his courtly skills not only to instruct Vanessa, but also to exonerate Cadenus from responsibility. For example, he presents Cadenus as wholly innocent in intention:

His Conduct might have made him styl'd
A Father, and the Nymph his Child.
That innocent Delight he took
To see the Virgin mind her Book,
Was but the Master's secret Joy
In School to hear the finest Boy. (548-553)

This is the description given by the third-person narrator, and thus it has the appearance of an impartial judgment. Cadenus's own claim to innocent intentions is made in his mind: he cannot therefore be accused of putting on an act to convince Vanessa. The claim is made more convincing by the mention of the distress and responsibility he felt--presumably for not foreseeing what has happened to Vanessa's feelings:

Cadenus felt within him rise
Shame, Disappointment, Guilt, Surprise.
He knew not how to reconcile
Such Language, with her usual Style:
And yet her Words were so exprest,
He cou'd not hope she spoke in Jest.
His Thoughts had wholly been confin'd
To form and cultivate her Mind. (624-631)

In spite of not being able to "hope she spoke in Jest," having been so

completely unaware of her as a woman, he cannot believe he has made her so much aware of him as a man. As his apologia continues, he claims that if her passion is sincere, and becomes generally known, he must appear to the world guilty of having "made a treach'rous Use/ Of Wit, to flatter and seduce" (644-645). Again, in exonerating himself in the character of Cadenus, Swift flatters Vanessa, for had they married, the great man would probably have been considered the "catch", not the obscure girl, even though "the harmless Maid" was heiress to a modest fortune. The general impression of an unassuming Cadenus has already been given in the account of his reaction after he has first noticed Vanessa's "distracted Mind." The gentle tutor (how different, apparently, from the irascible one Lady Acheson knew)

modestly conjectures
 His Pupil might be tir'd with Lectures;
 Which help'd to mortify his Pride,
 Yet gave him not the Heart to chide;
 But in a mild dejected Strain,
 At last he ventur'd to complain. (568-573)

Swift also exonerates Cadenus by demonstrating the logical inevitability of the affair. Vanessa tells Cadenus that "he must answer for her Faults," and then brings "weighty Arguments to prove/ That Reason was her Guide in Love." The samples of arguments Swift gives resemble exercises in formal logic.¹ Vanessa's love-inspired eloquence makes them so persuasive that Cadenus "Insensibly came on her Side" (720); then, naturally, "tho' her Arguments were Strong/ At least cou'd hardly wish them wrong."

But Swift exonerates Cadenus most effectively of all in the way he develops the fable of the poem, in which the responsibility for what happened is wholly externalised: it is Cupid who engineered the whole affair, deliberately selecting Cadenus as the instrument of his vengeance on Pallas for the injury she has done to Venus in frustrating her plan.

Vanessa, searching "in Books for Wisdom's aid,/ Was, in the very Search,
betray'd" (690-691). When she takes up Cadenus's book, the cover, unlike
the covers of other books, proves an inadequate shield against Cupid's
armoury: he

Took Aim, and shot with all his Strength
A Dart of such prodigious Length,
It pierc'd the feeble Volume thro',
And deep transfix'd her Bosom too (516-519).

Cadenus, gratified in spite of himself by Vanessa's passion for him, can
rationalise "'Tis Merit must with her prevail,/ He never knew her judgment
fail" (754-755), and chooses

to justify his Pride;
Constr'ing the Passion she had shown,
Much to her Praise, more to his Own.
Nature in him had Merit plac'd,
In her, a most judicious taste. (763-767)

But in terms of the fable, this is not the true explanation. Cadenus may
well reflect "It was an unforeseen Event,/ Things took a Turn he never
meant." (730-731)

As we consider the character of Cadenus, however, we become increas-
ingly aware that Swift's attitude to his surrogate is far from simple.
Cadenus is his representative in the fable of the poem, but the portrait
of Cadenus is not a self-portrait.² From time to time we have seen the
poet standing apart from Cadenus and observing him with an ironic eye.
Cadenus was incredulous and gratified at being "Preferr'd before a crowd
of Beaux." Cadenus is naïf. If Swift, despising beaux, were addressing
Vanessa in his own character, he would surely consider it an insult to
her taste and intelligence to express such incredulity and gratification.
Cadenus offers Vanessa, as a substitute for love, "Gratitude, Respect,
Esteem," and "that Devotion we bestow,/ When Goddesses appear below,"
the sort of devotion that Swift elsewhere so consistently condemns. This

kind of talk he later refers to in derogatory terms when, as narrator, he tells us that the world will never know

Whether the nymph, to please her Swain
 Talks in a high Romantick Strain;
 Or whether he at last descends
 To like with less Seraphick Ends.³

Cadenus is tender-minded, as Swift is not. Remorsefully, he claims to be

now convinc'd he acted wrong,
 To hide her from the World so long;
 And in dull Studies to engage
 One of her tender Sex and Age.
 That ev'ry Nymph with Envy own'd,
 How she might shine in the Grande-Monde,
 And ev'ry Shepherd was undone
 To see her cloister'd like a Nun.
 This was a visionary Scheme,
 He wak'd, and found it but a Dream;
 A Project far above his Skill,
 For Nature must be Nature still. (576-587)⁴

It was no doubt easier for Swift to exonerate a Cadenus who was less intelligent and tough-minded than his real-life counterpart, and to sustain the balance of his courtier-like approach to Vanessa it was no doubt necessary to make some compromises and tone down the reality. It is possible that the real-life character of the ironist revealed himself unwittingly. But he may deliberately have allowed himself to appear, and as a result the whole complimentary apparatus may have been given added spice for Vanessa, if she chose to savour it. The underlying irony is strong enough to give the flavour of Swift's personality and wit, but not strong enough to invalidate the compliment. Vanessa was highly intelligent. Perhaps this poem is an expression of a much greater intellectual intimacy than at first appears, and perhaps Swift is an even more subtle practitioner of the courtly arts than he at first seems to be in his address to the real Vanessa.

As we have remarked, in the course of heightening the compliment to Vanessa and exonerating himself from blame in his relationship with her,

Swift has praised himself. Other self-praise appears to be there entirely for its own sake, having only incidental bearing on the subject of the poem. Swift seems simply to be making an assertion of his own importance as a satirist and a politician. Cadenus, Cupid's choice as object for Vanessa's affections, was

a Subject fit,
Grown old in Politicks and Wit;
Caress'd by Ministers of State,
Of half Mankind the Dread and Hate (502-505).

He interprets Vanessa's "Complaisance,/ Just as a man sans Consequence" (658-659).

To an impartial observer there may seem to be little connection between Swift's role as courtier in search of his own advancement and his role as moralist. Knowing as he did that he was greatly gifted, he naturally sought the spheres in which he thought he could best exercise his gifts, and naturally he was deeply disappointed and frustrated when he was denied the opportunities for which he had hoped. It would be foolish to speculate much further about his motives, and perhaps to suggest that they were preponderantly altruistic would be to ignore his humanity. During the years of his greatest political activity in England,⁵ while he still hoped that eventually his services would be adequately rewarded, he wrote several poems in which he paid court to women and at the same time, as an ambitious man, proclaimed his own reputation and looked to his own interests, first with the old Whigs and then with the moderate Tories.

These poems are essentially "public" ones, and ones in which he addresses or writes about women of influence, rank, and wealth, the social superiors of a comparatively poor clergyman, however great his intellectual superiority and however exalted his spiritual and moral calling.

His main concern in writing such poems may have been neither ego-gratification nor self interest; but his writing them can have done his interests no harm. The earliest is "To Mrs. Biddy Floyd" (1708), his graceful tribute to the friend and companion of Lady Betty Germain, daughter of the Earl of Berkeley. There is no reason to suppose that he did not really admire Mrs. Floyd, a noted beauty, and his friendship with Lady Betty, begun in her girlhood when Swift served as chaplain to her father, then newly appointed as one of the Lords Justices of Ireland, lasted for the rest of his life. But although it is improbable that he wrote the poem purely from ambitious motives, in 1708 it was certainly in his interest to please his hitherto disappointing patron, for at that time he had hopes of being appointed Queen's Secretary, and of being sent in that capacity with Berkeley on his projected diplomatic mission to Vienna.⁶ Presumably Berkeley would be pleased with this poem addressed to a member of his household. About the same time, Swift tells us, he was amusing himself "sometimes with writing Verses to Mrs. Finch."⁷ This lady, herself a poet, later became Countess of Winchelsea. "Apollo Outwitted" is addressed to her, and together with Miss Frances Worsley she is referred to in "In Pity to the Emptying Town," a fact which leads Williams to suppose that this poem was written at the same time as "To Mrs. Biddy Floyd" and "Apollo Outwitted," "when Swift appears to have been in a mood to address or exchange verses with ladies of his acquaintance."⁸

In "To Lord Harley, since Earl of Oxford, on his Marriage," there is evidence beyond the mere existence of the poem that Swift in playing courtier to the bride and her husband was concerned with pleasing his patron, the bridegroom's father. Williams quotes Swift's entry in The Journal to

Stella, 8 November, 1711: "Lord Harley is a very valuable young gentleman; and they say the girl is handsome, and has good sense, but red hair," and adds the comment: "a less glowing account of the couple than he gives in the verses." She is given goddess-like status in the verses, belonging to a "sphere" from which she descends "to find/ A Mortal of Superior Kind" (79-80). Before she does so, the chief of those who are proud of titles, birth and fortune "madly aspire[d] to wear her chain" (42). Swift here establishes the worth of Lord and Lady Harley by ranking both of them far above the wealthy and high-born, a compliment that would lose its force if in this context he were suggesting that rank and wealth were unimportant. In this courtly poem, he may be paying tribute to the rank and wealth that the middle-class Lord Oxford was reputed to value so highly; as Williams reminds us, "Bolingbroke, writing to Swift, 1 Jan., 1721-2, sarcastically described [this] marriage as the ultimate object of Oxford's administration."⁹

Swift's services to Oxford's administration were never adequately rewarded. He regarded his appointment in 1713 to the Deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin, instead of to the English deanery or bishopric for which he had hoped, as a sentence of exile. Oxford's fall the next year was followed within days by the Queen's death and the consequent fall of the rest of his friends from power. Hope of any further advancement became futile. In the poems of his later years, he shows an undiminished awareness of the discrepancy between his stature and his worldly status. In the Market Hill poems, his harping on the poverty of the clergy may reveal a general and unselfish concern for their plight, but it also may reveal a still rankling consciousness of his own comparatively unrewarded state. This attitude may lie beneath his comic exaggeration of his own shabbiness

in "The Grand Question Debated," in which he makes himself appear to be of less consequence even than the most junior clergy: "For the Dean was so shabby and looked like a Ninny,/ That the Captain suppos'd he was Curate to Jenny" (151-152). His teasing of Lady Acheson for her longing for more fashionable company than that of "rusty dull Rumms" conveys not only rebuke of her frivolousness, but also a wry comment upon the insignificant social status of the clergy. He makes her beg her husband to convert Hamilton's Bawn into a barrack, so that she may have the Captain's company. "I then," she says, "shall not value his Deanship a Straw,/ For the Captain, I warrant, will keep him in Awe." (32-33) The Captain will tell the Dean

that Chaplains should not be so pert;
That Men of his Coat should be minding their Prayers,
And not among Ladies to give themselves Airs. (31-38)

We may set these joking observations against other poems of the period, for example, "Drapier's Hill," in which he writes with sharper irony of the contrast between the fame and the rewards accorded to him by the world. Through an undefined persona he announces, "We give the World to understand,/ Our thriving D--n has purchas'd Land," which will bring him great profit,

Provided, 'to improve the Ground,
He will but add two Hundred Pound,
And from his endless hoarded Store,
To build a House five Hundred more. (5-8)

Sir Arthur's wish to "call the Mansion Drapier's Hill" will be granted,

That when a Nation long enslav'd,
Forgets by whom it once was sav'd;
When none the DRAPIER'S Praise shall sing;
His Signs aloft no longer swing;
His Medals and his Prints forgotten,
And all his Handkerchiefs are rotten;
His famous LETTERS made waste Paper;
This Hill may keep the Name of DRAPIER:
In Spight of Envy flourish still,
And DRAPIER'S vye with COOPER'S Hill. (11-20)

At the end of "To Dean Swift," purportedly by Sir Arthur Acheson, there is a bald and succinct statement of the true state of affairs as he sees it: as guest or tenant at Market Hill, he is not the honoree but the bestower of honour:

Happy, O Market-Hill! at least,
That court and courtiers have no taste:
You never else had known the Dean,
But, as of old, obscurely Iain. (27-30)

It seems, from the number of such references in the Market Hill poems, that he may have felt his hosts did not fully appreciate the honour he did them in being their guest. Perhaps such sentiments were in his mind, if only in the background, when later, in "Epistle to a Lady," he associated his instruction of Lady Acheson with his part in the application of "Alecto's Whip" (179) to "the Nation's Representatives" (155).

The most complicated of Swift's courtly poems belongs to a slightly earlier part of his career. "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," not printed, so far as we know, until 1730, was almost certainly written several years earlier, immediately after the resounding victory of the Drapier. The poem is a triumph of courtiership both in the grace with which Swift compliments the lady and in the subtlety with which he asserts his own worth. Even more remarkable is the way in which the courtier contrives to instruct. Although we must not strain the comparison, to some extent this poem may be seen as a companion piece to "Cadenus and Vanessa." But Lady Carteret is no Vanessa; she is the first lady of Ireland. In "An Apology," Swift is cast, not as the tutor who persuades like a courtier, but as the courtier, impelled by his own pride as well as by his sense of pedagogic duty to correct the woman to whom he pays court and for whom he feels genuine regard. His great achievement is that he can so smoothly and simultaneously renew an old friendship, defend himself and his

prestige, pay real tribute to a great lady, and tactfully admonish her for failing in the duties that go with her position.

Both Lord Carteret and his wife (the Miss Worsley mentioned in "In Pity to the Emptying Town")¹⁰ were old friends of Swift's. But when Carteret came to Ireland in October, 1724, to take up his position as Lord Lieutenant, circumstances could hardly have seemed less conducive to the continuation of the friendship, in spite of Swift's having warned Carteret of those circumstances by letter.¹¹ Ireland, seething with indignation at having William Wood's copper coinage foisted upon her, had, under the leadership of Swift, at last organised an effective boycott against it. Carteret, representative of the Crown, and therefore of the administration of Walpole, granter of the patent to Wood, had been sent to Ireland with the specific task of quelling the incipient rebellion.¹² Although Swift was acting under cover, conducting his campaign chiefly by publishing a series of letters purporting to be written by M. B., a linen draper, the identity of the Drapier was an open secret. The boldness of the fourth letter, timed to appear on the very day of Carteret's arrival and containing an attack on Walpole and a challenging of "the recent act to secure the political dependency of Ireland"¹³ forced Carteret to take strong action, which included the issuing of a proclamation offering a reward for the discovery of the author. The Irish did not yield, and before long Carteret recommended the withdrawal of the patent, which eventually was rescinded in August, 1725.

At this time Swift was at Quilca. It must have been immediately after his return to Dublin in October that (according to the poem) he was summoned to dine with Lady Carteret at the Castle, and arrived there to find that the lady was out and that none of the servants had been told to expect him. The situation was, to say the least of it, delicate. In the little world of

Ireland, Swift was at the peak of his prestige. His part in the Irish victory against the oppressors had made him a national hero. For the rest of his life, he was fêted wherever he went. Everywhere the name of the Drapier was commemorated. When he returned after absence from Dublin, crowds turned out to greet him, and when he returned by water, they came out in boats to meet him and escort him into port. Bells were rung. Bonfires were lit. At the time of the incident in the first flush of his triumph, universally idolised, this legend in his own time was slighted (and whether the slight was accidental makes little difference) by the first lady in the land.

Although Swift may have had few illusions about the value of acclaim by mobile vulgus, and although he may have regarded such acclaim in Ireland, the place of his exile, as particularly hollow, he was certainly proud of the achievement by which he had earned it.¹⁴ He may well have been piqued at what happened at the Castle. The apology he makes in the poem is for having given up and gone away. In more anger than embarrassment, perhaps, he may have forgotten the manners demanded by protocol. Perhaps, in fact, an apology really was called for, in spite of the general impression given by the poem with all its ironies that the boot was on the other foot. He may, of course, have feared that the snub was deliberate; the lady, after all, was the wife of the Lord Lieutenant, representative of the English government that Swift had so recently and so thoroughly discomfited. There is no reference to such recent events in the poem. But Swift does advance as one reason for his incredulity at being invited to the Castle his unpopularity with present administrators because of his association with their predecessors:

He long had bid the Court farewell
Retreating silent to his Cell;

Suspected for the Love he bore
 To one who sway'd some time before. (15-16)

He may, on the other hand, have taken the whole incident more lightly as far as his own prestige was concerned.

Whatever his private attitude to the event as it concerned himself, he saw in it an occasion for showing a woman how to live up to the demands of her place in the hierarchy to which she belonged. Because of this woman's special social position, he is concerned with her special responsibilities. In the hierarchy of Ireland, she is primate among women. The courtier's method is the only one by which he can instruct her with propriety. Combining his lesson with a genuine courtly tribute to the lady, Swift responds superbly to this superb opportunity for the exercise of his skills as a courtier. Lady Carteret could if she chose take the poem as a gesture of appeasement for a minor social blunder, symbolic, perhaps, of Swift's desire to show that recent public events had not impaired his private feelings of friendship; she could take it as a reproof, so subtly presented that she could never be entirely sure that it was intended; or she could take it as a delightful compliment, offered in flattering humility by the man whose regard was more sought after than anyone else's in that place and at that time. Or she could take the poem in all these ways simultaneously. He has contrived to suggest all the hierarchical relationships between them.

Especially in the earlier part of the poem, Swift contrives to exalt the lady by abasing the character representing himself, much as he did in "Cadenus and Vanessa." Knowing of his exalted reputation when he wrote "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," we can appreciate to the full the piquancy of his using this device, the effect of which is twofold. As in "Cadenus and Vanessa," it has the simple effect of heightening the

compliment, but at the same time it prepares us for the final lesson of the poem. By seeming never to relinquish his position of inferiority to the lady who has been rude to him, Swift is able to correct her without appearing to presume; and keeping her constantly in the superior position, he renders all the more telling his lesson that "Noblesse oblige."

In a lively dramatisation of the episode, he makes repeated references to his abject appearance and demeanour, enabling the reader to visualise the scene. He departs from the dramatic method only to add to the picture he is giving of the doctor's confusion by admitting us to his thoughts and feelings, even then contriving to suggest the speech that they prompt. Word after word, phrase after phrase, emphasise the flustered state and the humility of the doctor, hammering home (albeit with comic exaggeration) the impression of his inferiority to the lady. In receiving the invitation,

he gapes--and stares,
And scar[c]e believes his Eyes, or Ears;
Could not conceive what it should mean,
And fain wou'd hear it told again;
But then the 'Squire so trim and nice,
'Twere rude to make him tell it twice;
So bow'd, was thankful for the Honour:
And wou'd not fail to wait upon her. (19-26)

When the day arrives and he sets out, we see his careful attire and his unassuming bearing: "His Beaver brush'd, his Shoes, and Gown,/ Away he trudges into Town." (27-28) As he approaches the Castle,

He trembles at the Thoughts of State;
For, conscious of his Sheepish Gait,
His Spirits of a sudden fail'd him,
He stop'd, and cou'd not tell what ail'd him. (31-34)

He voices his comic incredulity at the honour being done to him, with a nice twist exalting the lady above even the Lord Lieutenant himself (or possibly just implying that the Dean would never be invited to the Castle

for purely social reasons):

What was the Message I receiv'd;
Why certainly the Captain rav'd?
To dine with Her! and come at Three!
Impossible! it can't be me.
Or may be I mistook the Word;
My Lady---it must be my Lord. (35-40)

Finding that his fears have, apparently, been justified, he returns home, thankful that the lady was not there to witness his confusion at the mistake. Swift dramatises the lady's reaction at finding he has left, putting into her mouth words that suggest her opinion of his inferior breeding in spite of her acknowledgement that the captain may be to blame:

Captain, I fear you've made some Blunder;
But pray. To morrow go at Ten,
I'll Try his Manners once again;
If Rudeness be the Effect of Knowledge,
My Son shall never see a College. (66-70)

In the account of the doctor's response to the second summons, once more his appearance and manner are presented vividly, comically, and dramatically:

The Doctor frighten'd at his Fault,
Is dress'd, and stealing thro' the Crowd,
Now pale as Death, then blush'd and bow'd;
Panting --- and faultring--- Humm'd and Ha'd. (76-79)

Finally, the lady "pit[ied] his Confusson" (85), and said she would forgive him and even return his visit if he apologised in verse. The doctor is

Glad to compound at any Rate;
So, bowing, seemingly comply'd;
Tho' if he durst, he had denied (94-96).

The comic exaggeration Swift employs in the belittling of the Doctor, of course, makes a joke of the affair. Thus Swift prevents the compliment from becoming sycophantic and the lesson from becoming too bold or too harsh. By this means, also, he maintains his dignity, suggesting the basic equality of friends who can share a joke. But the compliment remains, and the pupil has been prepared for the lesson.

The joking done, he moves at the same time into the roles of tutor and more sober courtier. As he compliments Lady Carteret (and himself) on the good taste that is more valuable than mere rank, she may take his words as statements of the values she lives by, or instruction on the values that she ought to acquire. He resolves to "entertain without Expence,/ Or Pride, or vain Magnificence," for he knows that to a Lady accustomed to "costly Fare,/ Simplicity alone is rare," and that she will agree with him that "high, and nice, and curious Meats,/ Are really but Vulgar treats." There is humour in his argument; he no doubt knew of his own reputation for frugality. But there may be a warning, too. Not only has the lady been inconsiderate of a guest by her carelessness: in blaming him for removing himself from his embarrassing situation, she has perhaps betrayed the fact that her newly-acquired honours have gone to her head. In the graceful conclusion of lesson or compliment, he suggests like a true courtier that beneath the mere forms they share a sound understanding of true beauty: instead of providing "Spoils of Persian Looms,/ The costly Boast of Regal Rooms" for her to walk on, he

Thought it more courtly and discreet,
To scatter Roses at her Feet;
Roses of richest Dye, that shone
With native Lustre like her own;
Beauty that needs no Aid of Art,
Thro' ev'ry Sense to reach the Heart (109-116).

Aristocratic in the best of senses, neither wishes or needs to practise conspicuous consumption.

In the conclusion of the poem, Swift appears for a moment to revert to his earlier role and tone of self-belittling courtier, but if the lady has already detected his reproof, she may find in his words a continuance of it. "The gracious Dame, tho' well she knew/ All this was much beneath her Due," is pleased to approve, or to seem to approve of his entertainment. When after walking in Swift's garden she is tired by the exercise

to which she is unaccustomed, he takes both the courtier's opportunity of vindicating himself and the tutor's opportunity of pointing the moral by comparing her situation to his own. She is unused to walking; he is unused, in these days, to visiting heads of state or their deputies. Speaking as the Doctor, he invites the lady to imagine the scene as he braves her supercilious entourage. The earlier appearances of the awkward, diffident Doctor have perhaps been merely preparations for this one. Sheltered by his assumed role, and by the humorous exaggerations that go with it, Swift can now refer more boldly than before to the lady's rudeness and his own cause for indignation. "Consider what it is," he says,

'To run the Gauntlet of the Court;
'Winning my Way by slow Approaches,
'Thro' Crowds of Coxcombs & of coaches;
'From the first fierce cockaded Gentry,
'Quite thro' the Tribe of waiting Gentry;
'To pass to many crowded Stages,
'And stand the Staring of your Pages;
'And after all, to crown my Spleen,
'Be told--You are not to be seen. (150-158)

He does not hide his opinion of the courtiers before whom he has been humiliated. His scorn for "the strutting Cornet" (49) and the "Crowds of Coxcombs" is overt; and the irony of his references to "th' important Men of Dress" (47) and "the Tribe of Waiting Gentry" is obvious. The rebuke once administered, however, the courtier-tutor seems immediately to remove the sting. The Doctor would have been no less discomfited if the Lady had been at home, for then, he says, he would have been "Forc'd to bear/ The Awe of your Majestic Air" (159-160). But by now the lady's ear may be well attuned to irony. In the final lines of the poem, however, although she may still hear the tones of the tutor-satirist, it is the courtier's voice that prevails:

'And can I then be faulty found
'In dreading this vexatious Round?

'Can it be strange if I eschew
'A Scene so glorious and so new?
'Or is he criminal that flies
'The living Lusture of your Eyes? (161-166)

The satire on values at court has ended with a genuine compliment in the courtly manner, addressed to a lady the quality of whose beauty, in contrast with the powdered and cockaded finery and artificiality of the courtiers, is "living".

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

¹But see note 15 on previous chapter.

²This distinction was observed early in the critical history of the poem, although it has frequently been forgotten since. In Fischer's words, "To Orrery's assumption that Cadenus and Vanessa are the exact counterparts to Swift and Esther Vanhomrigh, Deane Swift replied that, for all we know, the poem might be purely a work of Swift's imagination; and further, that even if we assume that Swift and Esther are, in some sense, Cadenus and Vanessa, the degree to which the poet's imagination has transformed them must remain hidden from us." ("The Echoic Poetry of Jonathan Swift," p. 42)

³The underlining is mine.

⁴Tyne sees in the final couplet, with its "tell-tale antithesis, 'Project'/'Nature'," a forceful hint from Swift, distruster of "projects", that Cadenus's plan for Vanessa's education was unrealistic. (Tyne, p. 526) Tyne apparently disregards such hints as the discrepancies between Cadenus's premisses and the facts--the nymphs and shepherds, we remember, were not impressed by Vanessa--and thus he apparently misses clues that show us that Swift the mimic and parodist is at work.

⁵For perhaps the fullest account yet given of Swift's life at this period, see Irvin Ehrenpreis, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age, II (London: Methuen, 1967).

⁶Correspondence, I, 105.

⁷Correspondence, I, 121.

⁸See headnote to the poem, Williams, p. 122.

⁹Williams, p. 176, headnote. See also Correspondence, II, 415. Ehrenpreis thinks the poem "important only as a token of Swift's intense loyalty to a feckless patron," but also adds, "There is no proof that a copy of the poem ever reached Oxford or his son, though I do assume one did." (Ehrenpreis, II, 673 and n.)

¹⁰See page 115 above.

¹¹April 28, 1724 (Correspondence, III, 11-13). See also the letter of September 4, as given by F. Elrington Ball, The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, III (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1912), 214. In Williams's edition, the relevant passage is omitted.

¹²For a full account of the affair, see Davis, X, ix-xxxi.

¹³Davis, X, xviii.

¹⁴His subsequent writings contain many references to his work as the Drapier; for example, see the poems discussed on pages 117 and 118 above.

III
THE PERFORMANCE OF SWIFT

CHAPTER 6
COURTIER, LOVER, AND POET

In the role of lover, Swift is at his most elusive; but his poetic addresses to the two women with whom his relationships were apparently the most intimate provide some insight into his conception of love. They also show the attitude he adopted in his own close personal relationships towards the woman-worship he deplores so strongly in general terms in such poems as "Strephon and Chloe," "Cassinus and Peter," and "The Lady's Dressing Room."

His attitude to Vanessa is more ambiguous than his attitude to Stella. We have suggested that in "Cadenus and Vanessa" Swift the tutor relies mainly upon the techniques of courtiership to persuade his pupil. This courtier-like approach increases rather than reduces the distance between them. He uses it again in "The Answer." Responding to Vanessa's rebus (and, certainly, taking his formal tone from her), he comments that her subject (himself) is "low", "mean", "small", and tells her that a rebus is a trifling thing, "But a Genius like her's no Subject can stifle,/ It shews and discovers itself through a Trifle" (11-12). He is tutor as well as courtier, pointing out that she throws away her wit in writing such a "mean" thing as a rebus--"A Thing never known to the Muses or Phoebus:/ The Corruption of Verse" (8-9). Moreover, in the conclusion of the poem, he touches on his disappointment as a courtier in the political sense:

The Changes which Faction has made in the State,
Have put the Dean's Politicks quite out of Date;

Now no one regards what he Utters with freedom,
And shou'd he write Pamphlets, no Great Man wou'd read'em. (23-26)

But we have noticed also that beneath the courtly surface of "Cadenus and Vanessa" a more intimate kind of communication may be taking place. In the first of "Verses to Vanessa," Swift reveals himself more unmistakably as a lover. The situation appears to be that Vanessa has complained of her lover's coldness or neglect. Swift's response is cautious. He pretends to be merely transcribing verses written by someone else. For the greater part of the poem he addresses Vanessa like a schoolmaster. In this lesson, however, he expresses his fundamental theory of the nature of love. The worthy lover is reasonable and virtuous (and we remember the orthodox Thomist view that man's particular virtue lies in the right use of his reason). "The Wise and Good" cannot help responding to wisdom and goodness in a woman: "Virtue still to virtue tends." (12) Thus, if Vanessa's lover proves untrue to her, "'Tis Virtue fails in Him or You" (14). In telling Vanessa how "to keep a worthy Lover's heart," the poet seems to imply that it is she who is at fault. But we cannot be sure that he is defending himself. In admitting the possibility that either could be guilty, he may be implying that both are guilty--that in this relationship there is friction because neither party is virtuous. Even at the end of the poem, when the mentor appears to turn courtier, it is uncertain whether the apparent compliment with which he seems to be disarming her is serious or ironic, or both at once. We cannot tell whether his final words are a comforting avowal, or a wry admission of mutual guilt in a guilty relationship:

But here Vanessa cannot err,
Nor are these Rules applyd to Her:
For who could such a Nymph forsake
Except a Blockhead or a Rake
Or how could she her Heart bestow
Except where wit and Virtue grow. (17-22)

But however this enigmatic poem is to be understood, the poet's commitment to the role of lover, willing or reluctant, is clear.

In two poems, one about Vanessa and the other addressed to Stella, Swift suggests plainly, however, that the lover's role is not for him. In "Cadenus and Vanessa," describing Cadenus's thought, not presenting his words, he tells us that "Cadenus, common Forms apart,/ In every scene had kept his Heart" (540-541), that he "understood not what was Love" (54). Later, it is implied, he voices his sentiments to Vanessa ("entertain[ing]" her "in exalted Strains"):

Love, hitherto a transient Guest,
Ne'er held Possession of his Breast;
So, long attending at the Gate,
Disdain'd to enter in so late. (768-771)

Love is a turmoil of passions, he claims, "Wherein his Dignity and Age/ Forbid Cadenus to engage." Instead of it, he offers

Friendship in its greatest Height,
A constant, rational Delight,
On Virtue's Basis fix'd to last,
When Love's Allurements long are past;
Which gently warms, but cannot burn (780-784).

Cadenus's dissociation of himself from "love" proves to be at least partly a matter of semantics. Having restricted the connotation of the word so that it applies only to the purely passionate relationship, he has gone on to describe love in its fuller sense,¹ but has refused to call it by its name. Similarly, in a poem to Stella,² Swift rejects the word and another of its narrowed applications (in this case, referring to the paltry sentiments of those who profess to love for the sake of being in fashion):

Thou, Stella, wert no longer young
When first for thee my Harp I strung:
Without one word of Cupid's Darts,
Of killing Eyes, or bleeding Hearts:
With Friendship and Esteem possess'd,
I ne'er admitted Love a Guest. (9-14)

And in what follows, he seems once more to be referring to love in the comprehensive sense and calling it friendship:

In all the Habitudes of Life,
The Friend, the Mistress, and the Wife,
Variety we still Pursue,
In Pleasure seek for something new:
.....
But his Pursuits are at an End,
Whom Stella chuses for a Friend. (15-24)

Although Swift may possibly have shrunk from playing the role of lover in life, his rejection of it in these poems clearly owes something to his distaste for associating himself with the debased attitude that the word "love" so often denotes.

He may have felt unwilling or unable to express real love directly and seriously in the terms associated with the travesty of love practised by the beaux and with the blasphemy of the woman-worshippers. But in the poems to Stella he does so indirectly and humorously in his use of one of the conventions of love-poetry, the complimentary conceit. In using the convention, he plays courtier and lover simultaneously.

By "conceit" I mean an idea (often expressed in a metaphor or other comparison) ingeniously worked out as an organic part of the poem. We have already referred to the birthday poem of 1721, in which the compliment to Stella's lasting beauty, the beauty of her mind, is expressed in the organising device of the poem, the comparison of Stella to "The Angel Inn." In the birthday poem of 1725, Swift takes the idea that he is too old to write the poem and Stella too old to be the subject of it, and develops it first into the consoling idea that she does not look old to him, because his sight has declined with her beauty, and then into the real compliment: "No length of Time can make you quit/ Honour and Virtue, Sense and Wit." As long as he can hear her, she will be young--that is, capable of inspiring love--to him. In both these poems, we see, he uses the conceit

as a means not only of complimenting Stella, but also of stating the grounds of love. "A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth," too, consists of a conceit: as the cow in poverty-stricken Scotland, starved throughout the winter, feeds on the fresh vegetation of spring, so that "Without an Ounce of last Year's Flesh,/ Whate'er she gains is young and fresh," so Stella at Quilca will be renewed:

Nor Flesh nor Blood will be the same,
 Nor aught of Stella, but the Name

 And if your Flesh and Blood be new,
 You'll be no more your former You;
 But for a blooming Nymph will pass,
 Just Fifteen, coming Summer's Grass. (33-40)

The affectionate exaggeration is developed so that Stella becomes the heroine of a pastoral idyll in which her admirers, though rustic, offer her courtly devotion:

Your jetty Locks with Garlands crown'd,
 While all the Squires from nine Miles round,
 Attended by a brace of Curs,
 With Jocky Boots, and Silver Spurs;
 No less than Justices o' Quorum,
 Their Cow-boys bearing Cloaks before 'um,
 Shall leave deciding broken Pates,
 To Kiss your Steps at Quilca Gates. (41-48)

In another of the birthday poems (1723), Swift takes a simple domestic event, the digging up of "a great Bottle of Wine, long Buried," and contrives his conceit by inventing a fable: Apollo, stunned by the dull productions of the "whole set of Ir..sh D..ns," fails to give Swift the inspiration he needs for composing Stella's birthday poem. Instead, however, he sends him to Mrs. Brent, priestess of the god of earth, who can direct him to the "Tomb" of a bottle containing "a strong, inspiring Juice." This "Sov'reign Medicine for the Brains," created by "The God of Winds and God of Fire," and Bacchus himself, will be so effective, Apollo says to Swift, that "The Muse will at your Call appear,/ With

Stella's Praise to crown the Year." The birthday poem of 1719 provides a particularly telling example of Swift's creation of the complimentary conceit. In it he takes the unromantic topic of Stella's weight,³ increased by her years, and treats it at once realistically and romantically: he admits it, makes a joke of it, at the same time denying its importance, and then transforms the joke. First he tells her not to be troubled

Although thy Size and Years are doubled,
 Since first I saw thee at Sixteen
 The brightest Virgin of the Green,
 So little is thy Form declin'd
 Made up so largely in thy Mind (4-8).

He plays with the notion suggested by "doubled", still dwelling upon the characteristics of Stella:

Oh, would it please the Gods to split
 Thy Beauty, Size, and Years, and Wit,
 No Age could Furnish out a Pair
 Of Nymphs so gracefull, Wise and fair
 With half the Lustre of Your Eyes,
 With half thy Wit, thy Years and Size. (9-14)

In the final lines, the game continues, but with a change of mood, and a shift of emphasis from Stella to the poet:

And then before it grew too late,
 How should I beg of gentle Fate,
 (That either Nymph might have her Swain,)
 To split my Worship too in Twain. (15-18)

By means of a single, unexpected word, at the last moment the joke has been transformed and the poet has revealed the devotion that underlies the teasing. The force of "worship" used without a trace of irony, is all the greater for the contrast provided by its context.

There is less connection than at first appears, perhaps, between Swift's real devotion to Stella and his use of the complimentary conceit. On the evidence of the poems of 1722, 1723 and 1725, it appears that there was usually a gathering of friends on Stella's birthday, and that Swift

was not the only one who presented verses to her at this time. The form, in fact, was perhaps dictated by the occasion rather than the poet's feelings, although he may have used the form as a means of expressing those feelings. The poems are "public"⁴ rather than private and personal. Moreover, all of them except "A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth" were actually published in Stella's lifetime.⁵

When Stella literally held court on her birthday and Swift became literally her courtier, the compliment was heightened by the formal perfection he achieved in the verses. The recipient of such addresses could hardly fail to be gratified, if only by the realisation that so much care must have gone into the making of them. Nevertheless, the overriding impression given by the poems is that they are no merely formal tributes, but rather the expression of strong feeling, the work of Swift the lover rather than Swift the courtier. The ultimate cause of this impression of deep feeling may be that the poet felt deeply. But the impression derives immediately from his poetic technique; he writes not only of Stella's perfections but also of his own reactions to them. It is probably significant that he employs this technique only in the poems to Stella. We have already commented upon the powerful effect of his sudden turning of our attention from Stella to himself at the end of the birthday poem of 1719.⁶ Similarly, at the end of "Don Carlos," after the teasing and the rebuke to Stella for her discontent with Dublin following her stay at Woodpark, the mood suddenly changes and the concluding compliment to Stella turns our attention sharply to the poet's feelings for her: "Yet granting all I said were true,/ A Cottage is Woodpark with You." At the end of "Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth" although there is no such striking change of mood, there is a change of focus: as an observer,

Swift has imagined the restored Stella holding court at Quilca; now he reminds us of his own care for her, greater than that of her courtiers, bringing her back to him metaphorically as he writes of her literal return to him in Dublin:

But, lest you should my Skill disgrace,
Come back before you're out of Case;
For if to Michaelmas you stay,
The new-born Flesh will melt away;
The Squires in Scorn will fly the House
For better Game, and look for Grouse:
But here, before the Frost can marr it,
We'll make it firm with Beef and Claret. (49-56)

In other poems, Swift himself is "present" throughout; and in the birthday poem of 1723, he writes more about himself than about Stella, although this is the most obviously public of the poems, and among the least personal.

The more closely we seem to be approaching Swift the man, and the clearer his apparent self-revelation becomes, the more we must be on guard, of course, against the intentional fallacy. But in some of the verse about Stella Swift does appear--sometimes only momentarily--to abandon role playing altogether and to speak out in his own character, in his own real-life role, as a lover. And sometimes we can be reasonably sure that we are catching sight briefly of the real-life character in unconscious self-revelation. For the most part, it is in the most sober poems that Swift the lover seems to speak directly, and in the apparently more light-hearted ones that he reveals himself indirectly.

The affectionate teasing present in so many of the more exuberant poems marks him clearly as a lover, living the role rather than playing it. Only in the security of a real love relationship, it seems to me, could a poet so happily write of the unromantic fact of his beloved's

fatness as he does in the birthday poem of 1719. In "Don Carlos," having teased Stella about her housekeeping and her attempt to emulate the entertainment at Woodpark, he then appears to withdraw to a less intimate, more courtier-like position:⁷

Since I must laugh, or cannot live,
 Good-natur'd Stella will forgive:
 We Poets when a Hint is new
 Regard not what is false or true,
 No Raillery* gives just Offence
 Where Truth has not the least Pretence;
 Nor can be more securely plac't
 Than on a Nymph of Stella's Tast. (57-64)

But the withdrawal is a prelude to a reassertation of the intimacy. He seems to retract: "I must confess your Wine and Vittle/ I was too hard upon--" only to renew the teasing by adding "a little." Occasionally there are revealing flashes in the badinage. In "To Charles Ford Esq^r on his Birthday Jan^y. 31st. for the Year 1722-3," Swift tells Ford that

Stella has betray'd her Trust,
 And, whisp'ring, charg'd me not to say
 That Mr. Ford was born to day:
 Or if at last, I needs must blab it,
 According to my usuall habit,
 She bid me with a serious Face
 Be sure conceal the Time and Place,
 And not my Compliment to spoyl
 By calling This your native Soyl;
 Or vex the Ladyes, when they knew
 That you are turning fourty two. (2-12)

We have a sudden glimpse of Stella acting like a wife. In providing it, Swift shows the humorous affection of a husband enjoying both the pretence that he is a little hen-pecked and the teasing with which he retaliates.

Although he often refers to Stella, especially in his more public utterances, as his pupil, in the verses addressed to her in sober vein he writes in the tone of a partner, an intimate friend rather than a teacher. Only twice does serious criticism of Stella appear in the poems, and on neither occasion is Swift's correction tutorial in tone. In "Don Carlos,"

he concludes his apology for "Raillery" with an admission:

And you must know in what I writ
 I had some Anger in my Wit.
 For when you sigh to leave Woodpark,
 The Place, the Welcome, and the Spark,
 To languish in this Odious Town,
 And pull your haughty Stomach down,
 You shew Don Carlos where to dwell,
 And grieve he ever left Pell-mell. (67-74)

The reproach (modified almost out of existence in the printed version, "Stella at Wood-Park"--or rather, almost entirely subordinated to the final tribute⁸) sounds as if it is made to an equal who has on this occasion failed to take into account the effect of her actions and needs to be set straight. It also contains a suggestion of pique. In the last part of "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems," Swift reproaches Stella for her quickness to resent criticism. One passage suggests that at this stage in their relationship she was sometimes angry when he played tutor to her:

Your Spirits Kindle to a Flame,
 Mov'd with the lightest Touch of Blame,
 And when a Friend in Kindness tries
 To shew you where your Error lies,
 Conviction does but more incense;
 Perverseness is your whole Defence:
 Truth, Judgment, Wit, give place to Spite,
 Regardless both of Wrong and Right.
 Your Virtues, all suspended, wait
 Till Time hath open'd Reason's Gate:
 And what is worse, your Passion bends
 Its Force against your nearest Friends. (87-98)

Perhaps at this time Stella had cause to be upset. Judging by the correspondence, it was the period of Swift's greatest intimacy with Vanessa, whom he saw in Dublin and visited at Celbridge where she had taken a house. People talked.⁹ There is no certain evidence of Stella's reaction. Dr. Patrick Delany, in his Observations, transcribes a short poem entitled "Jealousy", another version of which had been published in 1724,

and tells us that Stella was possibly the author. (pp. 68-70) Elsewhere he goes so far as to suggest that the publication of "Cadenus and Vanessa" was the cause of Stella's decline, "which followed soon, and sensibly increased after this event" (pp. 58-59).¹⁰ If Sheridan was right and Swift and Stella had actually been married in 1716-1717,¹¹ Stella might have felt she had additional cause to be distressed by Swift's friendship with Vanessa. The facts are no more than suggestive; but it seems at least possible that they are related to the discord revealed in "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems." Be this as it may. Whatever Swift's attitude to Stella, from the passage we have quoted it appears that she looked on him as partner rather than mentor and found his attempts to correct her inappropriate.

Although he continues to reprove her, his tone is not tutorial now. He softens his reproach to some extent by calling her touchiness her only fault. But, ever mindful of men's duty to conform to the design of the divinely ordered universe and "to seek that which is proper to them," he tells her of his grief that "those Spirits should be spent,/ For nobler Ends by Nature meant," and expands the theory that a passion is good or bad only according to the way it is used: "One Passion, by a diff'rent Turn,/ Makes Wit inflame, or Anger burn," just as the same sun ripens the grape and sours the wine.¹² Stella has evidently defended her "Turbulence of Blood" on the grounds that it

From stagnating preserves the Flood;
Which thus fermenting, by Degrees
Exalts the Spirits, sinks the Lees (128-130).

But, continuing the wine metaphor, Swift refutes her argument and continues his reproach, though again softening it as he tells her that "for once" she reasons wrong:

For should this Ferment last too long,
 By Time subsiding, you may find
 Nothing but Acid left behind.
 From Passion you may then be freed,
 When Peevishness and Spleen succeed. (132-136)

And he soberly challenges her to be honest as he asks her whether she will transcribe these lines with the rest, and "to her Failing set her Hand," or whether she will "prove his Accusation just" by burning them.

Swift has told Stella that "Manners, Decency and Pride" have taught her "in vain" to hide "from the World" her quickness to anger; "for see, your Friend hath brought/ To publick Light your only Fau't" (99-102). In "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness," written in the same year as the preceding poem, there is a parallel passage:

How would Ingratitude delight?
 And, how would Censure glut her Spight?
 If I should Stella's Kindness hide
 In Silence, or forget with Pride. (93-96)

We do not know which poem was written first. From the reference in both passages to the hiding of a quality and to pride, in one case Stella's, in the other his own, we may surmise that consciously or otherwise Swift is either compensating in the one poem for the reproach administered in the other, or echoing the compliment in the reproach.

Swift reveals himself as a lover most explicitly and directly in the poems written in the context of sickness. "To Stella, Visiting me" begins formally to be sure. The initial compliment appears in all the trappings of mythology, the mythology, furthermore, that Swift has already employed in "Cadenus and Vanessa":¹³

Pallas observing Stella's Wit
 Was more than for her Sex was Fit;
 And that her Beauty, soon or late,
 Might breed Confusion in the State,
 In high Concern for human Kind,
 Fixt Honour in her infant Mind. (1-6)

The forty-seven lines that follow consist of an anatomy of "Honour". Only after this passage of philosophy, general in content and impersonal in tone, does Swift turn to Stella again, and, not addressing her, but writing of her in the third person, enumerates the qualities and deeds that show her to be honourable. Now for a few lines he addresses her directly, but only to present a formal and mythology-related apostrophe, beginning "Say, Stella, was Prometheus Blind,/ And forming you, mistook your Kind?" (85-86) This passage is the prelude to the last part of his enumeration of her qualities, in which he praises her kindness and at last writes explicitly of their personal relationship, but still in the third person and formally; suggesting his gratitude indirectly by means of a personification of its opposite, and looking outward to the world of outsiders and their opinion:

How would Ingratitude delight?
And, how would Censure glut her Sight?
If I should Stella's Kindness hide
In Silence, or forget with Pride. (93-96)

Still in the third person, he describes Stella's caring for him in his illness, only at the end of the poem addressing her directly. But in this part of the poem the emphasis shifts, and by simple description of the episode that exemplified Stella's kindness, part dramatisation, part comment upon the feelings underlying the action, Swift expresses the essential element of the love relationship between them: the deep concern of each for the other. He describes his own weakness when ill, "Impatient both of Night and Day,/ Lamenting in unmanly Strains" (98-99) and her selfless care for him:

Then Stella ran to my Relief
With chearful Face, and inward Grief;
And, though by Heaven's severe Decree
She suffers hourly more than me,
No cruel Master could require
From Slaves employ'd for daily Hire

What Stella by her Friendship warm'd,
With Vigour and Delight perform'd. (101-108)

He reciprocates in a tone of similarly unselfish concern and devotion:

Best Pattern of true Friends, beware;
You pay too dearly for your Care;
If, while your Tenderness secures
My Life, it must endanger yours. (117-120)

In "To Stella, March 13, 1723-24 Written on the Day of her Birth, but not on the Subject, when I was sick in bed," he writes in similar vein.

Lamenting that he is too ill to write a birthday poem on this occasion, he "grieve[s] she ever saw the light," then exclaims against his own ingratitude,

since to her I owe
That I these pains can undergo.
She tends me, like an humble slave;
And, when indecently I rave,
When out my brutish passions break,
With gall in ev'ry word I speak,
She, with soft speech, my anguish cheers
Or melts my passions down with tears:
Although 'tis easy to descry
She wants assistance more than I;
Yet seems to feel my pains alone
And is a Stoic in her own. (6-18)

He shows, too, his concern for the preservation of the bond between them, threatened not only by the mortal dissolution foreshadowed by illness, but also by the failure of understanding that can result when illness distorts the personality. His anxiety shows itself as he reminds her of the uses of adversity:

All accidents of Life conspire
To raise up Stella's virtue higher;
Or else, to introduce the rest
Which have been latent in her breast.
Her firmness who could e'er have known,
Had she not evils of her own?
Her Kindness who could ever guess,
Had not her Friends been in distress? (21-28)

And he concludes the poem with a direct appeal:

Whatever base returns you find
 From me, Dear Stella, still be Kind.
 In your own heart you'll reap the Fruit,
 Tho' I continue still a brute.
 But when I once am out of pain,
 I promise to be good again. (29-34)

His distress at the thought that Stella's illness, in turn, may affect her attitude to him and weaken the bond of understanding between them, emerges in the final birthday poem, and it is significant perhaps that the poem ends with his expression of that distress:

O then, whatever Heav'n intends,
 Take Pity on your pitying Friends;
 Nor let your Ills affect your Mind,
 To fancy they can be unkind.
 Me, surely, me, you ought to spare,
 Who gladly would your Suff'rings share;
 Or give my Scrap of Life to you,
 And think it far beneath your Due;
 You, to whose Care so oft I owe,
 That I'm alive to tell you so. (79-88)

Though the poem ends like so many of the other poems to Stella, with a reminder of the poet's own feelings, until the end it is focused on Stella herself and her needs, although the needs are inseparable from his own. The keynote of the opening is courage. Tacitly acknowledging the fact that this is probably the last birthday, with panic-stilling calmness and resolution the poet fortifies Stella's sense of proportion. In the midst of dreadful change, he establishes an island of normality: the birthday is an occasion for celebration:

This Day, whate'er the Fates decree,
 Shall still be kept with Joy by me:
 This Day, then, let us not be told,
 That you are sick, and I grow old,
 Nor think on our approaching Ills,
 And talk of Spectacles and Pills;
 To morrow will be Time enough
 To hear such mortifying Stuff. (1-8)

The almost colloquial tone of the diction, especially in the last phrase, and the giving of equal weight to his aging and spectacles and her sickness

and pills establish the proposition that this birthday must be treated like those that have preceded it. Now the one respect in which it is different can be touched upon more explicitly, and the first mention of the only source of comfort can be made. Still the tone befits a normal occasion:

Yet, since from Reason may be brought
A better and more pleasing Thought,
Which can in spite of all Decays,
Support a few remaining Days:
From not the gravest of Divines,
Accept for once some serious Lines. (9-14)

Swift keeps his distance. By describing himself as "not the gravest of Divines," he links the occasion with all those others when the Dean has played jester and has laughed with his friends and celebrated the birthday in witty verse. "For once" suggests both that he has never addressed Stella seriously before, and that he never will again. Swift has adopted his role and Stella has been given her cue. His taking the lead in establishing a tolerable behaviour pattern on what could be a harrowing occasion if thoughts and feelings were allowed to get out of hand may well have done as much to help Stella as the philosophy he goes on to expound for her comfort and his own. Although they can no longer form "Long Schemes of Life, as heretofore" (16), he tells her, she "Can look with Joy on what is past" (18). Her life has been well spent. Can she feel no comfort in reflecting upon it? Can she reasonably believe "That all Effects of Virtue end?" It is significant that it is to Stella's reason that he speaks, and on her virtue that he dwells.

We observed in an earlier chapter¹⁴ that in the first of the "Verses to Vanessa" Swift equates virtue with God Himself. Underlying his comment that "Virtue still to Virtue tends" is the belief that Virtue in individuals is the manifestation of the God Who pervades His creation. Virtuous

men and women feel drawn together because their virtue is actually part of the all embracing and all informing Whole. In his words to the dying Stella, Swift the lover dwells once more upon the all pervasive and all uniting nature of Goodness. Virtue, now personified as a spirit dwelling in the limited world of the human individual, "Looks back with Joy where she has gone,/ And therefore goes with Courage on." (75-76) When Stella's "former Actions claim their Part,/ And join to fortify her Heart" (71-72), she is in harmony with the divine order (and therefore sustained by it) "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." When she dies, Virtue will be at her side to "guide [her] to a better State" (77-78). Only when Swift has thus tried by his reasoning to give her strength for what lies ahead and assurance of what will come after, does he turn to his own feelings and express his own devotion.¹⁵

It is not only in the poems addressed to Stella that we see Swift as her lover. The first part of a birthday poem for Rebecca Dingley,¹⁶ written only a few months before the last birthday poem for Stella, is dominated by Swift's concern for Stella to such an extent that the normal conventions for such an occasion are submerged altogether. Far from flattering Rebecca, Swift writes only of her shortcomings, and writes of them ruthlessly. The poem open with an apparently harmless passage:

This day, dear Bec, is thy nativity,
Had fate a lucky'r one, she'd give it ye:
She chose a thread of greatest length
And doubly twisted it for strength;
Nor will be able with her shears
To cut it off these forty years,
Then, who says care will kill a cat?
Rebecca shews they're out in that,
For she, tho' over-run with care,
Continues healthy, fat, and fair. (1-10)

The teasing that follows seems cruel, for it seems to be directed at Bec's stupidity. In "all her bustling" (27), "Her hands and feet conduct her

head" (22), "Her head is but a mere by-stander" (26), and thus the only effect of the bustling is to supply

The part of wholesome exercise:
Thus, nature hath resolv'd to pay her
The cat's nine lives and eke the care (28-30).

The apparent cruelty becomes in part understandable as it finds more forcible expression. The first part of the poem culminates in a rebuke to Rebecca for her selfishness, a rebuke expressed in biting irony:

Long may she live, and help her friends
Whene'er it suits her private ends;
Domestic business never mind
'Till coffee has her stomach lin'd;
But, when her breakfast gives her courage,
Then, think on Stella's chicken porridge;
I mean when Tyger has been serv'd,
Or else poor Stella may be starv'd. (31-38)

When we realise that Swift thinks Rebecca's futile activity and resultant worrying come not so much from muddleheadedness as from the fundamental self-centredness that dictates her priorities, we find the fierceness of this passage less inappropriate. For Swift has suggested that Bec's good health, fostered by the exercise her "bustling" gives her, is actually maintained at Stella's expense; for the selfishness at the root of the bustling actually deprives Stella of consideration and care that she needs. The attack may have been justified. But it is probably, more than anything else, an expression of Swift's frustration and anguish as he sees Stella decline and Rebecca flourish, and an outlet for the emotional turmoil caused by an inadmissible wish. In any case, as rebuke or catharsis, the outburst was enough, apparently. There is one more thrust,¹⁷ but this as well as Swift's attitude to Rebecca in the remainder of the poem is gentle.

In the poems concerned with women, we have seen Swift as mentor, courtier, lover--and poet. We shall do little more than mention this

last major function of Swift in relation to his fellow creatures, this major role on the stage of the world, for our main evidence of its existence is the existence of the poems themselves. Of the poems in which the poet's role is a main topic, most are outside the scope of our study. The exception is "An Epistle to a Lady," and in an earlier reference to this poem we touched upon the subject.¹⁸ But it is not only in the poems in which he analyses the poet's function that Swift refers to himself as a poet. In a number of the poems concerning women, in most of those addressed to Stella, for example, he deliberately steps into the role. In the birthday poems, of course, the occasion makes the adoption of it particularly appropriate. In the poem of 1723, it is an essential part of the fable, the organising device of the poem, in which as celebrant of the birthday he appeals to Apollo for aid and receives Apollo's answer. In the poem for 1725, he is Stella's "Annual Bard." In "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems," he reminds her: "Thou, Stella, wert no longer young,/ When first for thee my Harp I strung" (9-10), and later assures her,

Your Virtues safely I commend,
They on no Accidents depend:
Let Malice look with all her Eyes,
She dares not say the Poet Lyes. (79-82)

In the poem of 1722, he laments that his "Poetick Vein declines" (10):

My Harp will soon in vain be strung,
And all Your Virtues left unsung:
For, none among the upstart Race
Of Poets dare assume my Place. (11-14)

In "Don Carlos," he accounts (temporarily) for the severity of his jest in terms of the role: "We Poets when a Hint is new/ Regard not what is false or true."¹⁹ (59-60) But in the poem of 1724 there is only a faint reminder of the role as he speaks of his present inability to play it:

"Tormented with incessant pains,/ Can I devise poetic strains?" (1-2)

We notice also that he does not always sustain the role throughout the poem, but drops it when it has served his purpose, as he does, for example, in the poem of 1725 and in "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems." But the detailed consideration of Swift's use and methods of role playing, as distinct from the roles and the role playing themselves, belongs with the discussion of his dramatic method, in the next chapter.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 6

¹Swift's reflections upon "love in its fuller sense" were discussed on pages 83-84 above. As Greene points out at the conclusion of his essay on the "scatological" poems, "Swift's concept of the relationship between men and women is that neither of a romantic nor a Freudian, nor, above all, of a neurotic, but simply the view of an orthodox Christian moralist." (Greene, 686) See also Ohlin's essay on "Cadenus and Vanessa."

²"To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems."

³See On the Death of Mrs. Johnson. Swift tells us that as a child she was sickly, "but then grew into perfect health, and was looked upon as one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London, only a little too fat" (Davies, V, 227).

⁴See also "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his poems" and "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness." In both of these poems, Swift speaks explicitly of making Stella's behaviour known to others. See page 140 above.

⁵In Miscellanies: The Last Volume, 1727.

⁶See page 134 above.

⁷The withdrawal is more strongly marked in the published version of the poem, "Stella at Wood-Park."

⁸Yet, when you sigh to leave Wood-Park,
The Scene, the Welcome, and the Spark,
To languish in this Odious Town,
And pull your haughty Stomach down;
We think you quite mistake the Case;
The Virtue lies not in the Place:
For though my Raillery were true,
A Cottage is Wood-Park with you. (85-92)

⁹Shortly after their quarrel and her death, Swift undertook "a Southern journey." Williams comments that whenever this journey was planned, "it has the appearance of being dictated by the desire to escape Dublin gossip" (Correspondence, II, 453 and n.). About this time, Stella paid the long visit to Charles Ford that is referred to in "Stella at Wood-Park." For an example of the kind of story that circulated, see Thomas Sheridan, The Life of the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, 2nd ed. (London: J. F. and C. Rivington et al., 1787), pp. 284-286.

¹⁰In "The Uses of Virtue: Swift's Last Poem to Stella," in Essays in Honor of Esmond Linworth Marilla, ed. Thomas Austin Kirby and William John Olive (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 203, John I. Fischer suggests that the tumult caused by Swift's friendship with Vanessa is reflected in the final plea of the poem.

¹¹Sheridan, p. 279. See also Orrery, p. 14.

¹²Cf. Pope, An Essay on Man, II.

¹³Cf. pages 49-50 and 86 above.

¹⁴See pages 84-85 above.

¹⁵For an illuminating reading of the poem as a whole, and for illuminating comments upon the Platonic elements in it, and upon its ending, see Fischer's "The Uses of Virtue."

¹⁶"Bec's Birthday; November 8th., MDCCXXVI."

¹⁷"Still be she curious, never hearken." (43)

¹⁸See page 89 above.

¹⁹The association is weakened in "Stella at Wood-Park," in which "But" is substituted for "We". (Williams, p. 751)

IV
DRAMATIC DEVICES, FORMS AND IMAGERY

CHAPTER 7
THE DEAN OBSERVED

In our discussion of women, the man-woman relationship, and Swift himself on the stage of the world, the choice of poems to be examined has naturally been dictated by their subject matter. In our discussion of Swift's use of dramatic devices, forms, and imagery, we shall for the most part confine ourselves to the same group of poems.¹ Shifting our attention from what Swift is saying to the way he is saying it, we shall look first at his presentation of himself as a character in the dramatised situation and consider the effects he achieves by means of it. He presents himself in both the first person and the third, and I believe that in both cases the reader responds as a member of an audience. Among the most consistently dramatic of the poems in which Swift himself is a character are those in which he externalises himself completely, those in which the chaplain, or the Dean, or Cadenus, or "a grave Divine" is observed like the rest of the cast as if from beyond the proscenium arch.

Once the character is on stage, of course, he may speak, and except where Swift's irony is obvious our final impression may be that the poet is speaking straightforwardly in his own character, albeit at one remove. But we should not forget that our response has been conditioned. By putting the Dean on exactly the same footing as the rest of the dramatis personae, Swift has been able to create a context for the Dean's words as well as the words themselves, a context that may have considerable influence upon the spirit in which the listener hears. We observe

Swift's use of this device, and its results, in "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," for example. "The Doctor" can speak more freely to the lady than Swift in his own character could do. In the Doctor's long final speech, Swift can convey his rebuke as well as his compliment chiefly because he has prepared the way by his earlier characterisation² of the "grave Divine" and the lady. In this poem, then, and also in "Cadenus and Vanessa," the device of presenting himself as a character observed and commented upon by others is to some extent protective, enabling him to avoid the inappropriate intimacy or the too-firm commitment of direct address, as well as creating the illusion that the character is impartially observed and that consequently he may be judged fairly from the presentation.

Naturally enough, many of the occasions on which "the Dean" or "the Doctor" appears in the poetry are those on which Swift is thinking of himself as a public figure. This becomes particularly obvious in the asides of the omniscient narrator, for example, in "Cadenus and Vanessa," in which Cadenus is described as

Grown old in Politicks and Wit;
Caress'd by Ministers of State,
Of half Mankind the Dread and Hate (503-505).

Similarly, in "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," the narrator says of the "grave Divine":

He long had bid the Court farewell,
Retreating silent to his Cell;
Suspected for the love he bore
To one who sway'd some time before. (13-16)

In "Holyhead, Sept. 25, 1727," from writing in the first person and in the familiar tone appropriate to a diary, Swift suddenly withdraws and writes of himself as "the Dean" as he reflects wryly on the delays to which a distinguished but poor man is subjected:

The Captain swears the sea's too rough
He has not passengers enough.

And thus the Dean is forc't to stay
Till others come to help the pay. (9-12)

Swift's projection of himself specifically as "the Dean" calls for further comment. If the mere fact of the poet's referring to himself in the third person puts the reader into the position of an observer or member of an audience rather than of an individual personally addressed, it is not surprising that his referring to himself in the third person and by his title creates an atmosphere of formality. We are made conscious simultaneously of our distance from him, great in comparison with the intimacy of "me" and "you," and of his status in his own right. However ironically he may use the stage character he has thus created, he seems to have tried to create a basically respectful audience.

The device, then, may be used in part protectively but it is also used in part aggressively, as it is even in the light-hearted mock-heroic dramatisation, "On Cutting down the Old Thorn at Market Hill." In this poem, Swift asserts the status of the protagonist not only by means of the plot, not only by the introduction of an important antagonist (a minor goddess, no less), but also by the minor device of naming the protagonist by his title: "The cruel Dean in Scorn" cuts down the tree "with sacriligious Hand" (23-24); "the Murd'rer . . . trembling hears" the displaced and dying nymph address him as "chief Contriver of my Fall,/ Relentless Dean!" and refer to him, to Sir Arthur, as "that Assassin in Crape . . . that fell Dean by whose Command/ Was formed this Machi'villian Plot." Of course, it is necessary for the poet to give the protagonist as much importance as possible for the sake of the mock-heroics, and no doubt Swift uses his title chiefly in this cause. But even in the joke we can see his assertiveness, his insistence, paradoxically, on both his influence in

Sir Arthur's household and his condescension in concerning himself with domestic trivia.³

Perhaps this defensive aggressiveness is shown, too, in Swift's projection of himself as "the Dean" even when he writes about and presumably for Stella in "Stella's Distress," "Don Carlos," and the combined versions of the two poems, "Stella at Wood-Park." It is when the need arises for Swift to assert his prestige that "the Dean" appears. A little piqued by Stella's display of discontent when she must return from Woodpark to Dublin, a little uneasy at the thought that Charles Ford's treatment of Stella has pleased her so much,⁴ he grasps the nettle and explicitly suggests the rivalry with Ford, asserting himself and his standing in opposition to Ford and his assets: Stella returns "From Ford who thinks of nothing mean/ To the poor doings of the Dean," and when she can no longer afford to imitate the style of living she has enjoyed at Woodpark, she falls "into her former Scene,/ Small Beer, a Herring, and the Dean."⁵ We note in passing that the only other references to "the Dean" in the Stella poems occur in two "public" ones, those of 1723 and 1725, in which the character is mentioned in connection with other deans and with other friends who pay tribute to Stella on her birthday.

Swift uses the device of presenting himself as a character observed from the outside in a more complex way when he looks at himself from the point of view of another character within a poem.⁶ The earliest example is in "Mrs. Harris's Petition," in which he appears as the chaplain, seen through the eyes of Mrs. Harris, a narrator who dramatises her experience and whose own character is firmly established by her characteristic way of talking. Compared with Mrs. Harris herself, the Chaplain is a shadowy figure, important though he is to the plot of the poem. But the very

inadequacy of the representation is perhaps the cream of the joke. Far from drawing a self-portrait, Swift is setting up a humorous contrast between Mrs. Harris's impression of him and his speech, and the reality outside the poem.

Parson, said I, can you cast a Nativity, when a Body's plunder'd?
 (Now you must know, he hates to be call'd Parson, like the Devil.)
 Truly, says he, Mrs. Nab, it might become you to be more civil:
 If your money be gone, as a Learned Divine says, d'ye see,
 You are no Text for my Handling, so take that from me:
 I was never taken for a Conjuror before, I'd have you to know.
Lord, said I, don't be angry, I'm sure I never thought you so:
 (53-59)

It is in the Market Hill poems that Swift plays his most complicated games with the device of presenting himself as seen by others, using the personalities of those made to observe him as both filter and screen. These are among the most revealing of the poems. The device gives him not only a powerful and flexible apparatus, but also, because of the distance and protection it provides, a way of expressing freely his own view of himself.⁷

The chief observer of the Dean is Lady Acheson. She is made to speak of him in "My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean," "Lady A-S-N Weary of the Dean," "To Janus," "The Grand Question Debated," and "A Panegyrick on the Dean." By examining two of these poems in detail, let us demonstrate the complexity and richness of the patterns Swift creates and the revelations they provide.⁸

In "My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint against the Dean" (as its title implies, a monologue put into the mouth of Lady Acheson), Swift is of course concerned with characterising Lady Acheson as well as the Dean, and, ultimately, himself. Let us for the sake of clarity call the stage character 'Nancy', the name by which she refers to herself in the poem, to distinguish her from the real Lady Acheson.

In each of the three parts of the poem, by means of Nancy's presentation of the Dean, Swift gives us at least five studies, one of the lady and four of himself. Through Nancy's account of the Dean's behaviour, we see how he appears to her. Through her reactions to that behaviour, we see how she appears to Swift. Through her comments on the Dean's behaviour, we see her assessment of his character. As outside observers we the audience receive an impression of the Dean that is different from Nancy's. And finally, behind the Dean we see Swift himself.

In the first part of the poem (1-86), Swift gives us Nancy's account of the Dean's behaviour. He bombards her incessantly with "rebus and pun," and harps upon her thinness. He not only finds fault with her diet, but "rails at [her] person" mercilessly, telling her, for example, that her elbows are sharp enough to make holes not only in her smock but also in her husband, and egging on Sir Arthur to call her "Skinny and Snipe." His roughness is not merely verbal: he drags her off on long walks over difficult terrain, and even attacks her physically, knocking her arms away when she props up her chin. In this account, Swift is also giving us a characterisation of Nancy. She reacts to the Dean's treatment of her by feeling sorry for herself: "Sure never did man see/ A wretch like poor Nancy." (1-2) She is "quite over-run" (13-14) by his witticisms, and "tire[d] to death . . . daggled and tatter'd,/ Her spirit quite shatter'd" (44 and 51-52) by the exercise he forces her to take. She retaliates with the pigheadedness of the weak, fasting

out of spite.
For I'd rather be dead,
Than it e'er should be said
I was better for him,
In stomach or limb. (54-58)

She is resentful of his attacks on her person. "What court breeding this is?" (69) As for Nancy's interpretation of the Dean's behaviour, she

believes he plagues her from self-indulgent motives. She says he rails at her person "for his diversion" (67), and sees his efforts "to lengthen her breath" (43) as "his Whim" (39). From all this, we, the audience, see what Nancy cannot see or will not acknowledge, namely that the Dean is trying to make her healthier by goading her to eat and to give up her sedentary habits. The audience, observing Swift as well as the Dean, sees that he is also making some acknowledgement of his idiosyncracies, possibly anticipating his hostess's criticisms and testing his welcome, or perhaps simply demonstrating an amiable ability to laugh at himself. We also observe that by his reference to rebuses and puns, he is giving a reminder of his wit.

A similar pattern of communication at five levels is evident in the second section of the poem (87-154), in which Nancy describes the Dean's attacks on her ignorance. Again she is sorry for herself and defensive. To her, he appears high-handed and conceited about his powers of judgment. He is ready to swear that a woman is a dunce after a single glance--"Can tell by her looks, / A hater of books." (91-94) He is rude, not only forgetting his manners as "He rages and frets" (41-42), but being more deliberately offensive as he tells her that ignorance spoils a woman's looks: "A civil Divine! I suppose meaning mine." (103-104) It is for his own pleasure that he plagues her: "He loves to be bitter at / A lady illiterate." (89-90) We, the audience, judge the Dean's motives more kindly, as we see his efforts to make Nancy treat her mind properly as well as her body. As before, we may also see some admission by Swift of his own shortcomings, his high-handedness, impatience and irascibility. It is, however, something extraneous to the poem itself, namely the memory of another poem that is echoed in it, that provides our most revealing

glimpse of Swift himself behind the character of the Dean. The climax of the "scene" (Swift's own word for it)⁹ is heralded by Nancy's description of what we can see as uncharacteristic (and therefore attention-getting) behaviour: "He haws and he hums,/ At last out it comes." (109-110) The passage that follows contains the climax of his message to Lady Acheson: "You're now in your prime,/ Make use of your time" (113-114).¹⁰ He warns her of what will happen if she neglects his advice and at "three-score" becomes a figure of fun:

How the hussies will fleer
Where'er you appear:
That silly old puss
Would fain be like us. (117-120)

Then, giving emphasis to what follows by the change in the Dean's mood, Swift shows his reluctant pupil the alternative:

And then he grows mild;
Come, be a good child:
If you are inclin'd
To polish your mind,
Be ador'd by the men
'Till threescore and ten,
And kill with the spleen
The jades of sixteen,
I'll shew you the way:
Read six hours a-day.
The wits will frequent ye,
And think you but twenty. (123-134)

This passage is strongly reminiscent of the conclusion of the birthday poem to Stella written in 1721, with its warning to the chit Chloe:

Though you and all your senceless Tribe
Could Art or Time or Nature bribe
To make you look like Beauty's Queen
And hold for ever at fifteen.
No Bloom of Youth can ever blind
The Cracks and Wrinkles of your Mind,
All Men of Sense will pass your Dore
And crowd to Stella's at fourscore. (51-58)

It is not unreasonable, I think, to conclude that consciously or unconsciously Swift was making comparisons between Lady Acheson and Stella.

In the final section of "My Lady's Lamentation" (155-202), Nancy describes what the Dean is doing while she toils over her book: he is not, as one might expect, "at study or prayer," but "all the day saunt'ring,/ With labourers bant'ring" (158-160), and getting "all dirty and wet," so that one cannot tell "Whose master, whose man" (166-168). "Proudly" (173) he "boasts of his feats," and "Shews all his gew--gaws,/ And gapes for applause" (177-180). Nancy is irritated by his bringing the Teagues in "among us" (162-163) and put out by his lack of dignity: she calls his joining in the physical work of gardening "a fine occupation/ For one of his station!" (181-182). She is maliciously amused when a calf and the village girls ruin the work of which he is so ridiculously proud and of which she is contemptuous:

A hole where a rabbit
Would scorn to inhabit,
Dug out in an hour,
He calls it a bow'r. (183-186)

Her words, however, do show spirit and a tart sense of humour. The Dean's conduct, as she observes it, is prompted by his desire to excel and to be praised for his excellence as a designer of gardens, and by his desire to be popular with the Teagues, whom he "bribes with mundungus" (164)¹¹ and with whom he is "hail fellow, well met" (165). The audience, on the other hand, sees the Dean as a creative man with wholesome enjoyments and no self-importance. We also see Swift, laughing at his own enthusiasms, and more seriously admitting his own fallibility. Carried away himself by the kind of grandiose ideas that he warns Lady Acheson about (in "Epistle to a Lady," for instance), he has forgotten, temporarily, "How transient all things are below."¹² Otherwise he would not have become so proud of the "bow'r" that was so easily destroyed, and would not have given it such a name in the first place. The bower is not merely destroyed. It is

befouled, by both the calf and the village girls. Once more, Swift has emphasised the incongruousness of human pride by means of scatology.

In the poem as a whole, we can see Swift's attempt to guide a relationship, as he reiterates the lessons he wants Lady Acheson to learn, and at the same time, tries to make her see him as the tease, the punster, the well-wisher, and perhaps also the fallible and therefore forgivable human being, rather than the irascible critic, and rude guest.

In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," in which the Dean is both observed and addressed by "a Lady of the North," Swift plays an even subtler and more complicated game. As in "My Lady's Lamentation," he is able to suggest simultaneously his view of the lady, her imagined view of him, and his own views of himself by means of the strictly controlled framework of the monologue and the consistent¹³ characterisation of the lady. But "the Lady of the North" is at once a more robust character than Nancy, and the vehicle for a more subtle analysis of the Dean's character. She lacks Nancy's self-pity, and is motivated by a desire for revenge, which she takes by means of heavy irony. The lady's irony in praising the Dean is consistent, but, at least superficially, Swift's attitude to her irony is not, and herein lies the subtlety of his self-portrait. At first, the irony is not even apparent. As we read the opening lines of the poem, we are conscious that they are ironic only if we have previous knowledge of the Dean and the lady:

Resolv'd my Gratitude to show,
Thrice Rev'rend D-n for all I owe;
Too long I have my Thanks delay'd;
Your Favours left too long unpay'd;
But now in all our Sexes Name,
My artless Muse shall sing your Fame. (1-6)

Only if we already know that the lady finds Swift an inveterate and undignified teaser of women, and of herself in particular, do we understand

that by "Gratitude" and "Favours" she means their opposites, that "Thrice" intensifies the Dean's least reverence-inspiring attributes, and that the panegyric "in all our Sexes Name" is to be a poem of vengeance, not praise. Only when the lady comes to specifics in her account of the Dean's behaviour does the poem itself provide evidence of her ironic attitude.

The irony, once we become aware of it, is at first easily interpreted. As Swift describes the Dean as the lady sees him, her irony is cancelled by his, so that when the lady indicts the Dean by appearing to praise him, to us, the audience, her indictment can be seen as Swift's assertion of praiseworthy qualities in himself. In the first part of the poem therefore, where Swift's attitude to the lady's irony is consistent, we come to his assessment of himself by a comparatively simple reversal of the meaning of her statements about the Dean. Thus, we gather from lines 7-22 that he is not indulgent to women and sees their faults clearly; that he does not flatter them, failing to win their hearts because he does not praise "their Wit and Parts": that he does not raise the lady's spirits by persuading her (and others) that she is "witty, beautiful, and young," and that, consequently, he is not responsible for the pertness she is assuming towards "Men of Sense." The joke becomes more pointed as with now obvious ambiguity the lady claims to be "Impatient to be out of Debt" (23), and tells him "My Heart with Emulation burns/ To make you suitable Returns." (29-30)

By making her announce the plan of her "Panegyrick on D-n S-," the poet tells us specifically that he is going to present us with a series of portraits of himself in his several roles: the lady's muse "Salutes the D-n in diff'rent views;/ D-n, Butler, Usher, Jester, Tutor," overseer

and dairyman. To begin with, the pattern of irony remains clear-cut. The lady, addressing her guest in his character as Dean, comments: "Envy must own, you understand your/ Precedence, and support your Grandeur" (66-67). She means that he is incongruously undignified. Swift means that her values are unsound and that he is free from vainglory. The passage continues in this vein for another eighteen lines. Then the pattern becomes less neat, as ironic variations and complications creep in. For example, when the lady is made to exclaim of the Dean's conversational style that it is "so clear and so concise,/ We never ask to hear you twice" (73-74), although we can take it that she finds the Dean's style difficult to understand and does ask him to repeat what he has said, we also observe the double entendre. She may be speaking with double irony, suggesting sarcastically that the listener must have understood perfectly the first time he heard the Dean: there can be no other explanation (such as boredom, or being offended) to account for his not asking the Dean to speak a second time. We may see another variation of the ironic pattern in the lady's ambiguous comment on the Dean's preaching and the way it is received:

How nice you split the hardest Text!
 How your superior Learning shines
 Above our Neighb'ring dull Divines!
 At Beggar's-Op'ra not so full Pit
 Is seen, as when you mount our Pulpit. (62-66)

She may mean that few people come to hear his sermons, either because they are dull or because they are over the heads of the listeners. This seems unlikely. Surely the whole congregation, such as it was, would turn out to hear the Drapier, whatever the quality of his preaching. Perhaps the implication of the lady's words is that the Dean did not preach at all when he stayed at Market Hill.¹⁴ The most probable explanation of the

ironic speech Swift has given to the lady is that in it he is making a statement about poor church attendance, or the sparseness of church membership (especially in the North where he is writing). Although most of the lady's ironic admiration of the Dean's dress obviously expresses Swift's contempt for those who concern themselves too much with their attire, especially for those who rely on it for prestige, her praise for his clean band cannot be interpreted so straightforwardly. It seems unlikely that anyone as fastidious as Swift would be careless about the cleanliness of his personal linen. Perhaps the band appeared less than crisply clean because it was threadbare. In "The Grand Question Debated," the dilapidated cassock and the crumpled band are mentioned as indications of shabbiness. Perhaps, in short, Swift is commenting here upon the poverty of the clergy in general and of himself in particular, with a sidelong glance at his high deserts and low reward.

Having established the lady's attitude to the Dean by a series of comments, each one heavily and antiphrastically ironic, Swift has been able to abandon rigidity. He does so most obviously when he makes the lady speak of the Dean's servant-like employments. She uses some antiphrastic irony as she claims to be turning to "a nobler scene," or addresses the Dean as "rev'rend" and refers to his "Genius . . . extensive" when she describes the activities she thinks so inappropriate for one of his station. But otherwise she is ironic only in general. She speaks of the particularities straightforwardly on the whole. Because her descriptions of the activities themselves call for no reversals of meaning or reinterpretation, to the reader the Dean appears as a down-to-earth and unpretentious man. Thus we read and understand that to the Dean "no Work is grievous or offensive," whether it be building pig sties, getting

rid of rats, or cleaning out the hen-houses.

We have already seen enough, perhaps, to be fully aware of the range and flexibility of expression Swift achieves in this poem by his device of presenting himself as a character observed through the eyes of another, so that it is unnecessary to consider each of the remaining portraits in detail. Some comments, however, remain to be made.

Making the lady's irony the constant element in the situation, Swift makes our response to it vary. Generally we disagree diametrically with her views, so that we accept her words at their face value, though not at the face value the lady would give them. Sometimes we disagree with her, but not diametrically. Occasionally, we agree with her; occasionally, in fact, Swift makes her a vehicle for self-criticism.

In her ironic account of the Dean as a jester, the lady is made to imply that he has lost friends by not knowing when to stop teasing, and by not pandering to people's tastes, and here there is nothing to suggest self-disapproval in Swift's attitude. But when, with an ambiguity appropriate to the delineation of a jester's character, she claims "There's none so ignorant or weak/ To take offence, at what you speak" (119-120), we may understand her to mean that some do take offence, and in doing so prove that they are ignorant or weak; or we may take it that Swift blames himself for failure to make allowance for ignorance and weakness, human inadequacies rather than crimes. Similarly, although her suggestion that he is no respecter of persons in his joking conveys Swift's approval of himself, the suggestion is followed by an ambiguous but probably self-critical passage. Speaking of Dermot, His Grace, Teague O'Murphy, an Earl, a Duchess and a Kitchen Girl, the lady ironically assures the Dean:

With such Dexterity you fit
Their sev'ral Talents to your Wit,

That Moll the Chamber-maid can smook,
And Gaghagan take ev'ry Joke. (125-128)

There seems no reason to suppose that Swift disagrees with her implied criticism.

In the last analysis, indeed, and as far as Swift's self-portrait is concerned, the poem as a whole may be taken as an exercise in humility. Despite some evidence of self-approval, it demonstrates Swift's pre-occupation with the contrast between human pretentiousness and human inadequacy. When the lady presents the Dean in his role of "Dairy Hand-maid," Swift appears to join the audience, to watch, and like the lady, to judge the Dean ridiculous. As the lady first makes us see him, the Dean seems far from pretentious, preferring honest, simple, productive labour to the practice of pride-ridden religiosity:

Let others with Fanatick Face,
Talk of their Milk for Babes of Grace;
From Tubs their snuffling Nonsense utter:
Thy Milk shall make us Tubs of Butter. (169-172)

But even in this apparent rejection of pride he is proud, and his pride is brought low. Far from making "Tubs of Butter," after a whole morning's work he has squeezed out little more than an ounce. The lady sees in his verse-writing an exact parallel to his butter-making. He practises it, she tells him, "With like Success,/ Nor is your Skill, or Labour less," and once more after a whole morning's work "Squeezing out four lines in Rhime," he is "largely paid for all [his] time." His role of poet was not even mentioned by the lady in her preliminary outline of the panegyric. Not only is his poetic skill put on the same footing as his skill as a Dairy Hand-maid and mentioned directly after it: the poetic ego is still further deflated. On the other side, the neighbour of the Dean-as-poet is the Dean-as-privy-builder, and the address to the privy-builder is

followed by the long apostrophe to Cloacine. We gather from "Daphne" that Lady Acheson did not, in Swift's opinion, appreciate him as a writer. In suggesting by his juxtapositions the lady's unflattering attitude to the Dean as poet, Swift may at the same time be showing self-knowledge and administering a warning to himself lest he forget his human condition.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

¹When we go outside it, it will be for the sake of particularly strong supportive evidence.

²The characterisation has not been made by purely dramatic methods. Although in the earlier part of poem, to project the character of the Doctor, Swift has relied so strongly upon the description of his appearance and behaviour and the reproduction of his speech, he has also (as in "Cadenus and Vanessa") admitted us into the Doctor's mind and set up the situation from the point of view of an omniscient narrator.

³Perhaps in this poem we see more of Swift's ambivalent attitude to the Achesons and the undercurrent of uneasiness in his relationship with them. See pages 95-96 and 117-118 above.

⁴He may have had stronger reasons for uneasiness. See pages 138 and 139 above, and note 9 on Chapter 6. In "Swift, Stella and Permanence," ELH, 27 (1960), 300, Ronald Paulson remarks that "most of Swift's poems concerning the man called Dr. Swift or the Dean were prompted by attacks: they are, like Pope's 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' at least in part apologies, presenting a respectable self-portrait in order to justify his right to compose satire."

⁵"Stella's Distress," 17-18 and 57-58, and "Stella at Wood-Park," 41-42 and 71-72.

⁶This point is noticed also by Maurice Johnson, in "Swift's Poetry Reconsidered," in English Writers of the Eighteenth Century, ed. John H. Middendorf (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 234 and 240-241.

⁷Unconscious self-revelation, too, may occur. Cf. pages 93 above and 184 below.

⁸Cf. Frederik N. Smith, "Dramatic Elements in Swift's Journal to Stella," Eighteenth Century Studies, 1, 1968, 346-347. Smith takes a passage from The Journal, and, as I have attempted to do here, analyses a "complex situation where several voices are heard." In his study (which I have read since I completed my own), Smith has found in The Journal dramatic elements that I have found in the poetry.

⁹See line 87.

¹⁰Cf. "The Journal of a Modern Lady," in which the lesson is essentially the same, and the method of imparting it, and the mood, are entirely different.

¹¹This rank tobacco is an added source of irritation to her, no doubt, as the bribe is given when the labourers are in the house.

¹²"The Journal," 116.

¹³But see page 212 below.

¹⁴Faulkner tells us that "The Author preached but once while he was there." See Williams, p. 888, n.

IV
DRAMATIC DEVICES, FORMS, AND IMAGERY

CHAPTER 8
THE FIRST PERSON

If the device of presenting himself as a character seen from the outside enabled Swift to speak freely about himself largely because of the protective distance it provided, it is hardly surprising that there is comparatively little of such apparently deliberate self-revelation when he speaks in his own voice. There are, moreover, few poems in which he speaks directly, and fewer still in which he does so throughout.¹ But there are many poems written from a first-person point of view, in which the "I" speaker represents neither Swift nor his persona. To begin with, then, our focus of interest in the first-person poems is not so much what Swift says about himself as what he does by means of the device of writing from the first-person point of view.

The question of point of view is among the most important in a discussion of what makes a poem playlike. The first person is, perhaps, potentially the most dramatic, although the presentation of characters in action to be observed and assessed by the reader is playlike in whatever person it is made. The reader responds as a member of an audience to the character described in the third person, addressed in the second, or speaking in the first. In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," for example, our relationship is audience-like to both the Dean and the Lady of the North. But our audience-like response to the first-person speaker is in a sense the more thorough-going, for we perceive the Lady directly and the Dean at second-hand.² We must judge the Lady solely by the words she is given to speak, without help from narration or comment.

By using direct address, moreover, a writer immediately prepares the reader for dialogue. Whether an answer comes or not, the conditions have been created in which answer is possible. Writers of poetical epistles--Horace, for example, and his followers, including Swift--frequently supply the imagined response of the people addressed,³ and thus create actual dialogue. "Epistle to a Lady" consists almost entirely of this kind of dialogue. Only twice does the original "I" speaker break the pattern with "Hearken, what my Lady says" (11), and "Now, methinks, I hear you cry" (91), to introduce her words. We are left to observe later changes of speaker⁴ for ourselves. Such poems are obviously drama-like in their effect upon the reader.

But whenever a poet writes in the first person, whether as himself or as someone else, his reader becomes actor as well as audience, stepping inside the drama as he becomes a listener and silent partner in the actual or suggested dialogue. This is largely because the natural response to hearing first person speech is to play "you" to the speaker's "I". If the first-person poem is addressed directly to the reader, the reader responds as he does when reading a letter, planning his reply even as he reads, and thus taking part in what would be dialogue if writer and reader were together. The reader reacts in this way, too, even when the "I" speaker is directing his words to another character within the poem; for although in this case he is not necessarily present in the "I" speaker's world, he must always be present in the poet's; to the poet he must always be "you".

In such poems as "A Panegyrick," in which there is a clearly distinguished inner world, it is obvious that the reader does not relinquish his place in the audience when he becomes an actor. From the outer sphere of reader and poet, the reader surveys the stage-like inner sphere

in which the "I" speaker and his partner are performing. But the reader must always and in any case be an outside observer, for he inhabits yet another sphere, outside the ones we have considered. Aware not only of the first-person speaker the writer has created, but also of the writer himself, he becomes the outside observer of the whole situation in which the writer is communicating.⁵ As that situation of course includes himself as recipient, the reader inevitably divides himself. The writer as well as the reader is subject to this inevitable self-dividing process. Even in writing a private diary, he divides himself into speaker and listener, and as he re-reads what he has written he makes another division and becomes audience too, assessing himself by "listening" to what one self is saying to the other. In the games Swift plays with his own roles and identity (and, by extension, with the roles and identities of others), he is externalising with exceptional skill and artistry a process that goes on in every thinking being. And in externalising, of course, he is also dramatising.

To see a poem as playlike, we must be conscious of the presence of at least two characters. In the poems that consist largely of dialogue, (once more, "Epistle to a Lady" will serve as example) the presence of more than one character is self-evident. In other poems, Swift suggests the presence of others by less direct methods. In "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-book," at first adopting the persona of the book itself, Swift includes in the cast the reader of the table-book, the lady herself, and the reader of the poem, not to mention the beau who writes in the book. In the character of the book left lying about, he first addresses someone who comes upon it: "Peruse my Leaves thru' ev'ry Part,/ And think thou seest my owners Heart." (1-2) The "someone" could of course be the owner

herself, but because Swift refers to her throughout the first sixteen lines in the third person, we are inclined to think rather of an outsider, such a one as he mentions in the two lines that follow: "Who that had Wit would place it here,/ For every peeping Fop to Jear." (17-18) At this point, perhaps, the poet abandons his persona. The book, at any rate, has become "it" and is referred to several lines later as "such a Book." We cannot be certain of the speaker's identity,⁶ but now the lady is addressed directly in the passage beginning: "To think that your Brains Issue is/ Expos'd to th' Excrement of his" (19-24). In the generalisation with which the poem concludes, the poet seems to look outward so that he addresses not only the lady but also all other readers of the poem:

Whoe're expects to hold his part
In such a Book and such a Heart,
If he be Wealthy and a Fool
Is in all Points the fittest Tool,
Of whom it may be justly said,
He's a Gold Pencil tipt with Lead (25-30) .

In "To Charles Ford Esq. on his Birthday Jan^{ry} 31st for the Year 1722-3," the "I" speaker (this time Swift himself) addresses himself steadily to Ford, and the dramatic quality of the poem as a whole does not become fully apparent until the end. We do have fleeting glimpses of the listening Ford, faint suggestions of the resistance he is putting up to the speaker's arguments, as the speaker exclaims "In London! what would you do there?" (35) and later says to him "If you have London still at heart/ We'll make a small one here by Art." (57-58) But it is only at the conclusion of the poem that we see him steadily enough to realise fully that he has been "there" all the time:

You see, my Arguments are Strong;
I wonder you held out so long,
But since you are convinc't at last
We'll pardon you for what is past. (109-112)

The poet has brought Ford to life as a stage character on the same plane of reality as the "I" speaker, by making the "I" speaker's words suggest the facial expression and gestures by which Ford, without speaking, is indicating capitulation. The clincher is in the final couplet. With a brisk changing of the subject the "I" speaker addresses Ford in terms he would use only if the character were actually present, and the whole poem slides into focus as a full dramatisation:⁷ "So--let us now for whisk prepare;/ Twelvence a Corner, if you dare." (113-114) Within the scene in which Swift and Ford are the characters there are inner ones, performed by other characters. The "I" speaker actually calls his portrayal of Townshend's behaviour a "Scene", and invites⁸ Ford to "observe" it (43-48). Although Stella's "betray[al of] her Trust" is presented by narrative, the incident has the impact of drama because her actual words are suggested, and those words suggest vividly her manner. Having warned Swift not to mention Ford's birthday, Stella has told him what to do "if at last, I needs must blab it,/ According to my usuall habit" (5-6). Her manner in turn suggests the attitude underlying it, and bringing the relationship between Stella and Swift to life, adds another dimension of drama to the portrayal.

Although the "I" speaker is by no means always the most conspicuous and fully-realised character in the well-populated worlds of the first-person poems, he is obviously the most important because the situation is presented from his point of view. He may be a character in his own right, he may be Swift's persona, or he may be Swift himself.

Of the first-person speakers who are characters in their own right we need say little more at this point. They reveal their characters and the situation in which they are to be observed by their speech, in

monologue (as in "Lady A-S-N Weary of the Dean" or "Mrs. Harris's Petition"), or in dialogue (as in the "Epistle to a Lady"⁹). The thoughts they voice are their own, as Swift imagines them. In some of the poems, however, the independent character represented by "I", without changing and without relinquishing his separate identity, takes on another function, as Swift's mouthpiece. Thus, in "Apollo to Dean Swift," the "I" speaker Apollo is an independent character, existing on the same plane of reality as his sister Diana, Delany, Stella, and Swift himself, and absolutely essential to the fable of the poem. But at the same time, Swift is using Apollo as his persona, through whom to tease and compliment Stella and Delany, and to express his own views of the "Pretender to Rhyme" who thinks that he can rely on inspiration "Without troubling his Head about Judgment or Wit" (20). Similarly, in "An Answer to a late Scandalous Poem wherein the Author most audaciously presumes to compare a Cloud to a Woman" and in the printed version of the same poem,¹⁰ the cloud "Dennis Nephelee, chief Cap of Howth" must be a character in his own right to refute Sheridan's arguments in his "A New Simile for the Ladies,"¹¹ but he is also the vehicle for Swift's views on women and the folly of deifying them.

It is sometimes difficult to draw the line between the independent character used incidentally as a mouthpiece and the full-blown persona. In "Apollo's Edict" for example, although Apollo himself is the speaker, he associates his "edict" explicitly with his "Viceroy", Swift, and commands his "subjects" to "follow where he leads the Way." This introduction predisposes us to hear the instructions that follow as Swift's, and to regard Apollo as his persona. But Apollo's identity as an independent character is maintained. He tells the poets: "When e'er my Viceroy is address'd,/ Against the Phoenix I protest." (50-51)

It should be noted, however, that all three of the poems we have just mentioned were written by Swift as sequels to verses written by other people.¹² In each case, he is taking a fiction not of his own creating, and using an already established character as his mouthpiece. In most of the poems in which Swift speaks through a persona, the persona is not so fully developed as a dramatic character, and the organising device of the poem is not a monologue by the persona. Swift rarely uses the device emphatically enough, long enough, or simply enough to create the illusion that his mouthpiece is a character on stage.

When his mouthpiece is Everyman in one of his aspects, rather than a clearly distinguished individual such as Apollo or Dennis Nephelee, because Swift himself partakes of the nature of Everyman, the distinction between Swift and his persona is not striking although it may be clear. In "The Answer," Swift's response to Vanessa's "Rebus written by a Lady, on the Rev. D--n S---t,"¹³ his persona, which is clearly distinguished, is a reader of the poem. But we are aware that Swift is speaking through a persona and not in his own character only because he refers to himself as "The Dean"; if the Dean is an externalised character, we reason, he cannot also be the "I" of the poem.

Frequently, a persona is present for only part of a poem. As we observed in our discussion of Swift as poet,¹⁴ when the mask has served its purpose, Swift abandons it and speaks directly.¹⁵ At the beginning of the poem for 1725, he is Stella's "Annual Bard"; at the end, himself, the lover to whom Stella will always be young. At the beginning of "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems," he is the poet, praising Stella in formal and general terms for her virtues and reminding us of poets less wise in their choice of objects for admiration: at the end

he is the man,¹⁶ telling Stella specifically and directly of her faults, describing her quickness to anger and her resentment of correction, and challenging her to deny his accusations. At the beginning of "Epistle to a Lady," on the other hand, he appears to be writing in his own character as he replies to Lady Acheson's request--or if he has already assumed a mask, it is the mask of impatient and critical friend and it is indistinguishable from his own countenance. It is only in the later part of the poem (133-end) that he assumes a clearly distinguishable persona, the persona of the laughing satirist.

If we came to the unwilling satirist, Swift's persona at the beginning of "The Journal of a Modern Lady" (1-35), with no previous knowledge of Swift's views, we might be able to take the character at his face value and listen to him as if he were a character in a play. He speaks and is presented consistently enough. But if we are aware of Swift's irony from the beginning, or even if we come to suspect it from internal evidence (his protesting too much, his hyperbole, and the parenthetical information that several verses of hyperbole have been omitted), we become much too conscious of the multiplicity of voices speaking through the character to see him as a single individual. We hear not only the reluctant recorder of the shortcomings of women, but also the willing one; not only the admirer of women, but also the critic; and behind all these speakers we hear the satirist himself, the true friend of women, motivated by the desire to help them, his mockery not the end but the means.

At least in the endings of most of the poems to Stella, we can be reasonably certain that the "I" speaker is Swift himself rather than his persona. The birthday poems of 1719, 1724, 1725, 1727, "To Stella, Visiting me," "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems,"

"Stella at Wood-Park," and "Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth"---all end in one way or another on an unmistakably personal note. The style may be formal, as in the poem for 1719 (where the formality is belied by a single word, "worship") and in the greater part of "To Stella, Visiting me," or simple and direct as in "Don Carlos": "Yet granting all I said were true,/ A Cottage is Woodpark with You" (75-76). The sentiment may be underplayed, as in "Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth," or impassioned, as in the final birthday poem. But in every case the ending contains a clear statement of the direct personal relationship between speaker and listener. In "To Stella, Visiting me," the final effect of intimacy is achieved by a progression from formality, which is emphasised by Swift's use of pronouns. In the first ninety-four lines, he speaks as "I" only once, and then only incidentally ("If Honour I would here define" (9)). In these lines, "you" is used, but only as the equivalent of the impersonal "one", and in the formal apostrophe to Stella, beginning "Say, Stella, was Prometheus blind/ And forming you, mistook your kind?" (85-92) In the penultimate section (93-116), Swift becomes "I", and Stella is "she". Only in the final section (117-124) does Swift as "I" address Stella directly:

Best Pattern of true Friends, beware;
 You pay too dearly for your Care;
 If, while your Tenderness secures
 My Life, it must endanger yours. (117-120)

In our discussion of the identities of the first-person speakers, it has become apparent that in many cases the play-like quality of a first-person poem does not depend upon realistic characterisation of the first person. When in a single poem the "I" speaker represents in turn both Swift and his persona, the reader may hear two voices but he does not visualise two separate individuals. When two or more identities are

represented successively by the same "I" speaker, it is obviously more natural for the reader to imagine him as a single but protean character, lacking a constant point of view.¹⁷ We are confronted by a paradox. Although the "I" speaker more than any other character represented in the poems resembles a stage personage in that his speech is direct not reported, when he lacks a constant identity he seems to be the least stage-like of figures. Men in real life are complex, and protean in their utterances, and with all their complexities they can be represented convincingly enough in a real play. But in a work that is merely like a play, and like it in only some respects, as a rule the "I" speaker can be imagined by the reader in fully dramatic terms only as long as the "I" speaker's point of view is clear and consistent. Only strong and simple characterisation will stand up as "dramatic" against the pressures of all the non-dramatic elements in the poem.

But we have been thinking so far only in terms of "realistic" dramatic presentation. Before we dismiss the characterisation of some of the first-person speakers as non-dramatic, we must remember the kind of drama that, as we observed at the outset of this study, constituted in medieval times one of the most forcible expressions of the orthodox Christian world view. A reader bred in the tradition of the allegorical drama of the moralities will hear the several voices of the single first-person speaker and readily keep distinct the identities they represent. He may readily accept the characterisation as dramatic, for he is accustomed to the play in which aspects of a single individual are represented as separate characters, the play that is literally the dramatisation of encounters among the forces within him, the externalising of the psychomachia. The variety of the points of view that Swift adopts in

some of the first-person poems may well owe something to such habits of thought and the allegorical drama that engenders them. His use of stage imagery in "The Journal" shows that drama was in his mind, and its association with elements of microcosmography suggests that he may have been thinking of the drama of religious allegory¹⁸ as well as of classical drama. In this poem, he ranges with exceptional freedom in his presentation of himself. Although he calls upon Thalia to "tell in sober Lays" how the days are passed at Gaulstown, and says to her "Begin, my Muse," he goes on to tell of the daily routine in his own voice, using the plural "we" and speaking as a member of the house party. But simultaneously he is "the Dean," the character observed from the outside. Furthermore, a change from "we" to "I" seems to mark his assumption of the persona of the diarist as he reflects, "I might have mentioned several Facts,/ Like Episodes between the Acts," and enumerates them. At any rate, he steps outside the action he has been describing to comment upon his description of it.

But the most significant connection of the first-person poems with drama and the drama-related world view does not depend primarily upon the characterisation of the first-person speaker, whether we consider the characterisation in terms of realistic drama or allegorical. Far more important is the characteristic structure of these poems, to be discussed in the next chapter.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 8

¹For a discussion of the difficulty of establishing "Swift's exact relationship to his work and to his central character," see D. J. Dooley, "Image and Point of View in Swift," Papers in Language and Literature, 6 (1970), 125-135.

²The world of the Dean exists within the world of the Lady in this poem. See the following chapter.

³I cannot agree with Smith that "the actual dramatization of the audience is rare . . . in Swift" (Smith, p. 349).

⁴At lines 181 and 188. Line 188, admittedly, is ambiguous, and could be taken to be either inside or outside the dialogue.

⁵The logical conclusion of the argument is that in this sense all written communication in which the reader is in any way conscious of the writer's real or assumed personality is playlike, and railway timetables, recipes, knitting patterns and the like are the only written works which are not in this sense dramatic. We do not need to go so far. For one exposition of the perceptual theory concerned, see J. W. Dunne, Nothing Dies (London: Faber and Faber, 1940).

⁶Cf. E. San Juan, Jr., "The Anti-Poetry of Jonathan Swift," PQ, 44 (1965), 392-393.

⁷By dramatising his appeal to Ford, of course, Swift has been able to treat the response he hopes for as if it were an accomplished reality. Such a procedure may not have been any more persuasive than a straightforward appeal, but it must have been more stimulating, and in its liveliness it was fitting for the occasion.

⁸The syntax here is ambiguous. We have taken "observe" to be imperative, but the general effect of the lines is unaltered if we take it to be infinitive: "Nay would it not Your Passion raise" to "Observe where Bloody Townshend stands," etc.

⁹Here the dialogue is within Swift's monologue.

¹⁰"An Answer to a Scandalous Poem, wherein the Author most audaciously presumes to cast an Indignity upon their Highnesses the Clouds, by comparing them to a Woman."

¹¹Williams, pp. 612-616.

¹²"Apollo to Dean Swift" and "Apollo's Edict" are Swift's contribution to an exchange with Delany consisting of five poems. See the headnote provided by Williams, pp. 259-260.

¹³Williams, pp. 715-717.

¹⁴See page 148 above.

¹⁵See also "To Lord Harley . . . on his Marriage." In spite of Swift's claim that he is writing in his own character, as a friend, he addresses the bridegroom through the persona of courtier-poet. Once the poem has been given direction, the "I" speaker disappears. The longer second section of the poem consists of a compliment to the bride, and the first-person speaker never reasserts his presence.

¹⁶He does not completely abandon the formality of the poet-role, as we can see from his generalisation about the passions and his extended "wine" metaphor.

¹⁷We do well to remember the words of Claude Rawson in "Order and Cruelty: A Reading of Swift (with some comments on Pope and Johnson)," Essays in Criticism, 20 (1970), 31: "Unduly simplifying or systematic speculation as to when Swift is talking and when his 'persona', or about their 'diametrically opposite' meanings if both are talking at once, often turns masks into persons, and induces in some critics the most absurd expectations of coherently developed characterisation."

¹⁸See pages 225-226 below.

IV
DRAMATIC DEVICES, FORMS AND IMAGERY

CHAPTER 9
DRAMATIC IMAGINATION AND DRAMATIC STRUCTURE: SCENE AND PLAY

The reader's initial impression that a poem is "dramatic" may often be accounted for by Swift's practice of emphasising the aspects of a situation that can be visualised. The reader cannot fail to become a spectator when the poet fills his imagination with visible and clearly delineated objects and the clearly defined movements and specific actions of the characters in their setting. On Stella's return from Woodpark to Ormond Key, Swift tells us, "At going in you saw her stoop/ The narrow entry crush'd her Hoop." We also see "the dark and winding Stairs" that she curses, and

The Ceiling hardly six foot high
The smoaking Wainscot full of cracks
And half the Chairs with broken backs.
The Cubbard fasten'd with a Peg,

and the "rusty Tongs" that "have lost a leg."¹ We are invited by this glimpse of Stella's lodgings to participate in her discontent with them. We are similarly involved audience-fashion in her attempts to ape Woodpark, as she serves "A Supper worthy of her self,/ Five Nothings in five Plates of Delf."² Swift evidently saw the situation, or his description of it, in dramatic terms, for he describes Stella's pretentious behaviour as "the Farce," from which, when her money runs out, she falls "into her former Scene." Frequently, he lets the outward and visible sign demonstrate the inward and spiritual state of his characters, as he does, for example, in the case of the "orderly Divine" of "The Progress of Marriage"

and his ill-matched and self-centred wife. "Hasting to the Ball" she meets him returning home, and her whole attitude towards him is expressed in the scene evoked by a single line: "Her Chairmen push him from the wall." (85-86) In "The Journal," by making us "see" the gestures accompanying Dean Percival's words, Swift dramatises the Dean's behaviour without needing to give the words themselves:

How haughtily he lifts his Nose
To tell what ev'ry school Boy knows:
And with his Finger on his Thumb,
Explaining strikes opposers Dumb. (81-84)

As we read the final line, we see not only the Dean but also his opposers, wearing the enigmatic expression that accompanies being struck dumb by the crassness of the speaker, and being aware that the speaker mistakes their unflattering silence for awe. They do not speak because they know that on his level there is nothing to be said and that on theirs he is too stupid and too drunk with pride to understand them. Swift's description of figurative as well as real action is characterised by similarly enlightening "envisageability". In "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed His Poems," he suggests that extravagant poetic praise of women is the work of bad poets thrown off balance by the rare and heady delight of being paid. He does so by first suggesting the causal connection between inferiority and poverty, in three concrete details. The "Poet, starving in a Garret," to which he is confined "for want of Shoes," is spending his time "Conning old Topicks like a Parrot." The poet's tiny success and his reaction to it are ludicrous, and they are made to appear ludicrous. With fine bathos, Swift invites us to imagine the poet's muse "descending" to "drop/ A Slice of Bread, and Mutton-Chop," and the poet himself, "Exalted in his mighty Mind" by the unaccustomed comfort of having a pint of stout, a peck of coals, and mended stockings, actually taking to the air and

soaring so high that he "leaves the stars behind." Both the humour and the incisiveness of this passage (25-36) depend upon the clearness with which we can envisage the settings, the properties, and the contrasting actions of the two contrasting personages.

A by-product of Swift's practice of setting up a situation in such a way that we can envisage it is the involuntary self-portrait. When he sets up for our observation a character with whom he is personally involved, he as well as his subject comes under our scrutiny. In considering his attitude to Lady Acheson, particularly in "Daphne", we noticed that as he described her shortcomings as a stubborn pupil he also exposed his own as an over-demanding teacher.³ In "Dingley and Brent," he gives the essence of Rebecca Dingley's personality, as he sees it, chiefly by means of one short but telling example:

You tell a good jest,
And please all the rest,
Comes Dingley, and asks you, What was it?
And curious to know,
Away she will go
To seek an old rag in the closet. (13-18)

We see Rebecca, but we also see, in the intimacy of his family circle, a man accustomed to being lionised. We see him baffled and irritated when the dull but practical Rebecca, busy about her domestic affairs, humours him to the extent of asking him to repeat the joke she has failed to hear, and then makes it all too obvious by the vanity-wounding perfunctoriness of her interest that she is merely humouring him. Possibly Rebecca is irritating to Swift not only because she is stupid, self-centred, muddle-headed and inattentive, but also because she, the dull one, is not as impressed as she ought to be.⁴ "The Dean" is not on stage in this poem. Swift, concentrating on his presentation of Bec, presumably does not notice that he is presenting himself, too.

Swift's readiness to think in terms of concrete detail and specific example results again and again in the kind of "dramatisation" we have been considering. But his concern with the concrete and particular⁵ is not merely a matter of his having a certain kind of imagination; it is bound up with a belief in the value of the tangible, palpable model and the clarifying example to the seekers after virtue and wisdom. This belief is expressed in the fable of "Cadenus and Vanessa." Vanessa is (in the most literal sense) "A Model for her Sex design'd"⁶ (366). Venus creates a living example of the kind of woman the shepherds claim they could love, thinking that such an experiment "Wou'd shew the Merits of the Cause,/ Far better than consulting Laws" (134-135). Stella, too, is a model, whose "fair Example" is to "preach/ A Lesson she alone can teach." She is "Best Pattern of true Friends."⁷

Belief in the power of example is expressed in one aspect of the traditional comparison of the world to a stage. It will be remembered that the man performing in the God-directed drama is being watched by other men, and in his response to his testing the performer acts out a lesson about what should and should not be done. This aspect was seized upon by writers of cautionary works, writers such as Thomas Beard, who, according to the dedication of The Theatre of God's Judgments (1597, reprinted 1612, 1631, and 1648), wrote the work "to call into mens memories the wonderfull iudgements of God, and to set before their eyes a view of his iustice manifested in the world vpon sinners and reprobates, to the end that the drouisie consciences of Gods children might be awakened, and the desperat hearts of the wicked cōfounded."⁸ The writer emulates God in setting up the performances of human beings as in a theatre, for the edification of those who observe. Pierre Boaistuau claims a similar motive for

writing Le Theatre du Monde, in which, to help ungrateful and ignorant man who will not know himself, "ie luy ay dressé ce Theatre, auquel il peult contempler & aduiser . . . son infirmité & misere, a fin que faisant anatomie & reueue de toutes les parties de sa vie, il soit esmeu a detester sa vilité."⁹ There is evidence that Swift, too, readily associates the idea of models with the stage and with the world-stage complex of images. In "A Quiet Life and a Good Name," he presents an example to be avoided. Having dramatised Dick's submissiveness to his virago of a wife, Swift concludes by drawing the reader's attention explicitly to the moral¹⁰ as he exclaims, "False Patience and mistaken Pride," and shows that Dick is the representative example of many men, and, by implication, a warning example to others: "There are ten thousand Dicks beside." (55-6) Immediately before these lines, he has referred to a "real" dramatic presentation, the staged equivalent of what he has been doing in the poem: "The Prentices procur'd a Riding/ To act his Patience and her chiding." (53-54)¹¹ "The Journal of a Modern Lady" may be taken as another example of the cautionary dramatisation. In "The Birth of Manly Virtue," Swift's translation of Callimachus and panegyric on Carteret, we see an example of the model to be emulated, with attendant reminders of microcosmology. Jove creates Carteret as a model. He "gives Virtue Birth,/ And bids him bless, and mend the Earth," in accordance with the principle that "the Eye, by Form confin'd," will "Direct, and fix the wand'ring Mind," and "long-deluded Mortals" will "see,/ With Rapture, what they wont to flee" (15-16 and 11-14). This embodiment of Virtue exerts his influence at school and college, until

Fate ordains
He now shall shine in nobler Scenes;
(Rais'd high like some celestial Fire
To shine the more still rising higher)

Completely form'd in every Part,
To win the Soul, and glad the Heart (51-56).

Having achieved political eminence, "Virtue shews/ The Godlike Ends for which he rose" (97-98), as he teaches the ambitious that in the highest glory, greatness is allied with goodness. But "Virtue's" work is not complete. In writing of Carteret's appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Swift gives clear expression of the association in his mind of the world stage, the assigned role of the exemplary character, and the controlling presence of the divine power:

Now change the Scene; a nobler Care
Demands him in an higher Sphere;
Distress of Nations calls him hence,
Permitted so by Providence:
For Models, made to mend our Kind,
To no one Clime shou'd be confin'd. (111-116)

Even "Sphere" reminds us of the microcosmographically imagined universe.

It is impossible to tell which came first in Swift's mental make-up, a belief in the force of example to instruct and the usefulness of examples to explain, or the preference for thinking in concrete and particular rather than in abstract and general terms. But he probably took readily to such beliefs and habits of thought because of his natural tendency to visualise.

So far, we have discussed only brief "dramatic" passages, and we have accounted for their play-like quality in terms of the poet's ability to make us visualise characters, setting and action with exceptional clarity. But this is only a beginning. Swift does not present us only with dumb shows. Some of the poems consist entirely or almost entirely of dialogue or monologue. When characters actually speak, the effect is obviously play-like. The introduction of dialogue, moreover, makes possible the fullest use of other essentially dramatic devices. We have already become

aware, for example, of Swift's mastery of dramatic irony; in looking at him juggling with points of view in "My Lady's Lamentation" and "A Panegyric on the Dean," we noticed how he makes us see in the lady's words a significance far beyond the significance they hold for the speaker. He uses this device more simply, and, apparently, for purely comic effect, in "Mrs. Harris's Petition," in which much of the humour depends upon "Mrs. Harris's" unawareness of all the implications of what she is saying, and of the artlessness of her own logic. Finally, the actual shape of some of the poems is play-like.¹² A few are play-like in their entirety, and in others the play-like part makes up such a large proportion of the whole that dramatisation is the dominant mode and major organising device. The rest of this chapter will be concerned mainly with the play-like structure of some of the poems; and as before we shall note as we go the links between the dramatic elements in the presentation and the concepts underlying the world-stage complex of images.

Let us consider first the poems in which the action is dramatised in a single scene. "The Lady's Dressing Room" consists almost entirely of such a scene, and so does "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed." In "The Lady's Dressing Room," the setting--the disordered room with all its unmistakable evidence of the mortality of Strephon's "goddess"--is all important to the action (Strephon's prying and the disillusionment with Celia that it brings about). The narrator's presence is unobtrusive. We are aware of him when he interjects, "Why Strephon will you tell the rest?/ And must you needs describe the Chest?" (69-70), but he does not enter the action obviously until the last twenty-five lines of the poem, after the close of the scene that dominates it by its length and the detail in which the setting is presented. In the final twenty-five lines, in which

Strephon's disillusionment is extended to include all women, we discover that the powerful single scene is in fact set in an encompassing but less obvious one, in which Strephon and the narrator are participants on the same plane of reality. In "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," the dramatic impact of the single scene is greater, partly because the only thing about Corinna that the reader does not learn by simply observing her surroundings, her appearance and her actions is the exact content of the dreams that make her cry out in her sleep, and partly because the narrator who appears in the last ten lines belongs to the same world as the audience, and thus his comments, not addressed to anyone within the poem, do not create an encompassing world within it. In this poem, too, the relationship between setting and action is closer. In "The Lady's Dressing Room" Strephon is in a sense passive, merely perceiving and reacting to the physical details of the setting created by Celia, who has appeared briefly at the beginning of the poem. In "A Beautiful Young Nymph," the actions of Corinna, the only character, are all directly related to her appearance and her surroundings, and her story is conveyed to us almost exclusively by what she does with what we can see.

The most purely and strikingly dramatic of the single-scene poems is "Cassinus and Peter." Apart from an aside in the introductory sentence-- "(Muse, find me Names to fix my Metre,/ Cassinus this, and t'other Peter")-- the narrator does not assert his presence at all. Both the unfolding of the story itself and the way in which the poem becomes progressively more play-like are brilliant exercises in timing and building to a climax.

In the first twenty-eight lines the narrator describes the protagonist and his friend and sets the scene--and once more appearance and setting are integrally related to characterisation and action. Cassinus, "swallow'd up in Spleen," seemed

as just crept out of Bed;
 One greasy Stocking round his Head,
 The t'other he sat down to darn
 With Threads of diff'rent colour'd Yarn.
 His Breeches torn exposing wide
 A ragged Shirt, and tawny Hyde.
 Scorcht were his Shins, his Legs were bare,
 But, well embrown'd with Dirt and Hair.
 A Rug was o'er his Shoulders thrown;
 A Rug; for Night-gown he had none.
 His Jordan stood in Manner fitting
 Between his Legs, to spew or spit in.
 His antient Pipe in Sable dy'd,
 And half unsmoakt, lay by his Side,
 Him thus accoutred Peter found,
 With Eyes in Smoak and Weeping drown'd:
 The Leavings of his last Night's Pot
 On Embers plac'd, to drink it hot. (10-28)

At the outset, Swift has told us that the friends are "College Sophs," and by saying that they are "Both special Wits, and Lovers both," he has given us the impression that their interest in love is more a matter of conforming to a fashionable pattern than a matter of genuine feeling. The impression is confirmed when we learn that they habitually talked about "Love and Books in Rapture sweet"---and the juxtaposition of "Love" and "Books" is as suggestive as the earlier juxtaposition of "Wits" and "Lovers". We have been thoroughly prepared to see either student enjoying the pose of the lovelorn swain, learned from his reading and expected of him as a "Wit". When we are shown Cassinus, grossly dirty as well as dishevelled, most unromantically bleary-eyed, and actually repulsive amid repulsive squalor, we see at once that this derangement is more than a pose. Preparation for the denouement has begun. Eventually we shall discover the cause of the madness. Hints will come first to remind us that madness is traditionally a punishment for sacrilege or blasphemy. But we shall not find out what Cassinus's blasphemy¹³ is until we also find out Caelia's "crime"---in the last line of the poem. The spectacle of Cassinus at the beginning of the poem prepares us for the denouement in

another way, too. Having seen the apparently wilful dirtiness, the aggressive mortality of Cassinus himself, at the end of the poem we are all the more struck by Cassinus's sin in trying to elevate a fellow-mortal to the rank of goddess, and all the more impressed, not only by the poetic justice of his punishment, but also by the psychological inevitability of his complete mental disintegration. The mind cannot willingly support an inconsistency and yet remain whole.

The setting of the scene, then, proves to be an integral part of the action. It is followed immediately by the opening of the dialogue. After Peter's first speech the narrator briefly describes his action and Cassinus's: Peter "Then gave him some familiar Thumps,/ A College Joke to cure the Dumps" (37-38), and after a pause Cassinus, "with Grief opprest,/ Cry'd Caelia! thrice, and sigh'd the rest" (39-40). There are no more stage directions. The remaining seventy-eight lines of the poem consist of uninterrupted dialogue, through which the tension mounts as Peter advances hypothesis after hypothesis in his attempt to find out what is wrong and Cassinus rejects them all. Peter guesses at disasters, naming them in what seems to him descending order of importance: Caelia has died, she has played the whore, she has been disfigured by the small or greater pox, she has transferred her affections to the barber's boy. Cassinus's answers show a movement in the opposite direction.¹⁴ Brief and apparently reasonable at first, and sad but calm in tone, they become wilder and longer as he dismisses all Peter's guesses and ends in despair, saying farewell to the "vain, empty World," and looking toward the horrors of the underworld to which he moves. In answer to Peter's final request to be allowed to share the secret of Caelia's crime, in a twenty-two line crescendo that echoes the suspense-building pattern of the whole dialogue, Cassinus enjoins secrecy, ending with the warning to Peter that if he

fails he will be haunted by Cassinus's "Spectre dread/ Attending nightly round [his] Bed" (113-114). Finally, he prepares Peter (and us) to hear the solution of the mystery: "And yet, I dare confide in you;/ So, take my Secret, and adieu." (115-116) The climax and the denouement come together, not merely in the last couplet, but in the last word. In maintaining suspense until the last possible moment, Swift has achieved a dramatic triumph. The significance and force of the final word is contained in its meaning, its associations, its sound and its position, and it is given yet more punch by the tremendous contrast between it and the meaning, associations, sound and tone of the yearning, romantic phrase preceding it: "Oh! Caelia, Caelia, Caelia sh [its]."

We may note that these three strikingly play-like poems belong to the group in which Swift expresses most forcibly his views on what is wrong with the attitude of men to women, their failure to love women as human beings. His choice of the dramatic mode for expressing his concern about the human role may not have been conscious; but conscious or unconscious, it was probably not fortuitous.

Some of the poems contain several scenes. With the possible exception of the long exchange between Cadenus and Vanessa,¹⁵ these scenes are not as fully developed as those in the "one act" poems, and neither the scene between Cadenus and Vanessa nor any shorter scene approaches the near-perfection of "Cassinus and Peter" as a dramatisation. In a number of cases, however, the series itself has the shape of a play, with a significant beginning, middle and end and a clearly defined climax and denouement. Any form of narrative, of course, may have such a structure. We are justified in calling this disciplined shape dramatic only because the incidents making up the series are dramatised. The best example is "An

Apology to the Lady C-R-T." The dramatised episodes can be seen to constitute five acts. The first (19-26) shows the delivery of the invitation, the inciting action of our play. We see "the 'Squire so trim and nice," and the Doctor, gaping in astonishment and staring in incredulity, and finally bowing as he gives his answer, that he "wou'd not fail to wait upon her." This act is not wholly dramatic; although the characters and action are made envisageable, the reader is admitted into the Doctor's mind to learn that in his incredulousness he would have liked to ask the squire to repeat the message, but was afraid of appearing rude to such a fine emissary, and that he decided to cease wondering why he had been invited and simply to accept the situation and be "thankful for the Honour." These thoughts might influence his facial expression, but the exact detail of such thoughts could not be deduced from expression alone. In the second act (27-40), the impression of the Doctor's disquiet is intensified as we see him in his well-brushed beaver, shoes and gown, trembling as he approaches the guard at the entrance to the castle, stopping as "His Spirits of a sudden fail'd him," to soliloquise:

What was the Message I receiv'd;
 Why certainly the Captain rav'd?
 To dine with Her! and come at Three!
 Impossible! it can't be me.
 Or may be I mistook the Word;
 My Lady--it must be my Lord. (35-40)

This is rising action, for the Doctor's unease is to be justified in the climactic third act. There is little in the "second act" that cannot be deduced by observation of the Doctor's behaviour. Even in telling us that the Doctor is "conscious of his Sheepish Gait," the narrator suggests his self-conscious demeanour, and the gait itself. In the third act (41-74), set inside the castle and packed with characters, movement and suggested dialogue and soliloquy, the climax is reached as the apparent snub is

administered. The Doctor's trepidations, established in the first two acts, are justified: both the lady and her emissary are out, and he is clearly not expected by anyone else. After he has left, glad only to have escaped being caught in his mistake by the lady, she returns, and the falling action begins as she sends the second invitation, which will eventually lead to the resolution. The delivery of the second invitation takes place off-stage. It is referred to in a participial phrase at the beginning of the fourth act as having already happened:

Next Day another Message brought;
The Doctor frighten'd at his Fault,
Is dress'd, and stealing thro' the Crowd. (75-77)

In the dialogue that follows, part given in direct and part in reported speech, the lady states the terms on which she will forgive the Doctor, and he accepts them: he must return her invitation, and he must tell "the real Truth in Rhime." Of the second part of this promise we shall say more in a moment. The first part prepares us for the fifth act (in which it is fulfilled) and the resolution, in which the Doctor, on his own ground, is restored to the position from which he can administer a quiet rebuke, a compliment, and a lesson to the lady on the obligations that go with her position. The beginning of our fifth act is the least clearly defined; the Doctor's entertainment is first presented as the plan in his mind, and there is no obvious transition from the plan to the actuality. In our discussion we have of course taken the "play" at its face value, and this is appropriate. The action has been allowed to speak for itself. But the comic exaggeration of the Doctor's diffidence in fact makes it abundantly clear to the observers that it is the lady, not the Doctor, who is really at fault. The dramatisation has been the vehicle of Swift's irony. Although in this poem he is concerned with himself and his position in the world, he is also teaching a lesson. Once more, the fulfilment of a

moral purpose and the dramatic mode of expression go together.

Not all the series of scenes within a poem have a classical pattern of the kind we have just observed. In "The Journal of a Modern Lady," for example, although the individual incidents of the day are dramatised, the overall pattern in which they are arranged is the natural time order of the day, and there is no dramatic climax or denouement. In this poem Swift is representing a typical day, not a particular occurrence with a plot that lends itself to being shaped into a dramatic pattern. In "Mrs. Harris's Petition,"¹⁶ the internal action proceeds in a series of scenes--the loss of the purse, the discovery of the loss, the recounting of the dream, the confrontation with the supposed thief, the appeal to the chaplain for help and the ensuing quarrel with him, and the consultation with "my Lord." This series has dramatic shape in that the loss is the inciting action that leads to the climax--the rejection of Mrs. Harris by the chaplain, whom she has regarded as a prospective husband but who picks a quarrel with her when he hears that her dowry has gone. The denouement is projected when "my Lord" advises her to make a petition to the Lords Justices of Ireland for "a Share in next Sunday's Collection" (71), and for a letter "With an order for the Chaplain aforesaid; or instead of Him, a Better" (73). The petition itself, Mrs. Harris's monologue, forms an outer dramatic framework within which the series of recreated dialogues is contained. In the pattern of this poem, in fact, we see an additional dramatic dimension, the presence of which we first noticed in "The Lady's Dressing Room." The drama is played out horizontally in the inner series of scenes, and vertically between this series and the action that encompasses it; for the resolution of the situation enacted in the inner world takes place in the outer--in the making of the petition of which

the poem consists. A similar pattern can now be seen to exist in "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," in which although one denouement comes within the inner action, there is another in the actual writing of the poem, which was prepared for in the inner action by the second part of the Doctor's promise to the lady.¹⁷ The pattern is more obvious in "Mrs. Harris's Petition" because Mrs. Harris speaks in the first person and is obviously both the writer of the petition and the protagonist of the inner action. This is the earliest of the poems in which we see Swift working with the dramatic structure that is most significant to our argument, the structure of "encompassing actions". This last phrase comes from Thomas B. Stroup, who in his Microcosmos developed the thesis that the characteristic shape of the Elizabethan play is one of spheres within spheres, and who accounted for this shape by showing the influence on the playwrights of the concept of the microcosm, with its related concepts of the stage as a microcosm of the world, and the world itself as a stage. It seems doubtful that Swift's patterns of thought were influenced by Elizabethan drama. Apart from a few scattered references to Shakespeare, there is nothing in his works to suggest any interest in it. But he undoubtedly retained much of the world view that in Stroup's opinion influenced that drama. In the light of the observations we have already made both about Swift's world view and about his penchant for dramatisation as it appears in the poetry, it seems reasonable to suppose that the pattern of worlds within worlds as a dominant structural pattern of the poetry comes directly from the philosophical background he shares with the Elizabethans.

The pattern of encompassing actions appears whenever and however a scene is created within a scene.¹⁸ But we shall concern ourselves chiefly with two main groups of poems in which this pattern is the main structural device. The first consists of the poems we have so far referred to as

"first-person" poems. When the "I" speaker, already a dramatised character taking part in monologue or dialogue before the reader-audience, in turn dramatises the action of which he speaks, his dramatisation constitutes a play within a play. Once more, the Market Hill group of poems is a particularly rich source of examples.

In "The Grand Question Debated," the immediately obvious encompassing action is the discussion referred to in the title. Lady Acheson is the central figure in that we see her successively in conversation with her husband and her waiting woman, and finally and briefly with the Dean. Sir Arthur speaks first, telling his wife of the two possibilities he has in mind for the future of Hamilton's Bawn, asking her opinion but making it clear that he favours the plan for turning it into a malt house, because of the profits that will accrue. As he envisages the prosperity he will enjoy, he creates a little inner scene:

No little scrub Joint shall come on my Board:
And you and the Dean no more shall combine
To stint me at Night to one Bottle of Wine. (14-16)

Emboldened, presumably, by his extra bottle, he will assert his authority and will no more "for his [the Dean's] Humour, permit you to purloin/ A Stone and a quarter of Beef from my Sirloin" (17-18). The lady answers emphatically, "It must and it shall be a Barrack, my Life," and she in turn creates inner scenes as she imagines her present dull life--"I'm grown a mere Mopus; no Company comes;/ But a Rabble of Tenants, and rusty dull Rums" (27-28)--and the much livelier life she will enjoy when the company includes the Captain:

I then shall not value his Deanship a Straw,
For the Captain, I warrant, will keep him in Awe;
Or should he pretend to be brisk and alert,
Will tell him that Chaplains should not be so pert;
That Men of his Coat should be minding their Prayers,
And not among Ladies to give themselves Airs. (33-38)

So far, in the outer and inner scenes, we have been given plenty of evidence from which to judge the characters. We have been shown the Knight's concern for money, his readiness to indulge himself, his resentment of the Dean's interference and influence over the lady, and his integrity.¹⁹ We have been shown the lady's frivolousness, her childish satisfaction in the thought that the Dean will be discomfited at the hands of her new champion, and her lack of judgment, betrayed both by her description of the captain she would admire and her assumption that such a coxcomb would be capable of defeating the Dean. In the inner scenes, we have been shown the captain and the Dean himself. To assess these characters for ourselves, we have to adjust our vision to allow for the intervening personalities of the knight and the lady. As we look at their presentation of the Dean as a busybody and a sponger, however, we become aware of the creating hand of Swift himself, and thus of the world outside both the outer and inner scenes. As in "My Lady's Lamentation,"²⁰ we can see in the Dean's behaviour what the other characters in his milieu do not see, his concern for their welfare. And so far the Dean has appeared in every inner scene.

Now Hannah enters, the third participant in the debate, and in the first twenty-five lines she speaks, her character is established. She deplores the knight's preference, and with all the loquacity, the digressiveness, the hare-brained logic and the superstitiousness of a silly and ignorant woman, she attempts to be wise after the event. Then she urges her lady to nag her husband into submission, to "contrive and invent, / And worry him out, 'til he gives his Consent" (61-62). As she goes on to imagine life at Market Hill with a barrack close by, she creates three almost purely dramatic inner scenes. In the first of these, she briefly sets up the characters and the occasion--the first meeting of Sir Arthur

with the Captain--then lets her characters speak for themselves:

Noble Captain, your Servant--Sir Arthur your slave;
 You honour me much--the Honour is mine,--
 'Twas a sad rainy Night--but the Morning is fine--
 Pray, how does my Lady?--My Wife's at your Service.--
 I think I have seen her Picture by Jervis.--

and so on for six more lines (72-82). In her second vision, she imagines in wildly romantic terms the arrival of the Captain to call on the Lady, "At the Head of his Troop, with Trumpet and Drum." She reproduces the sound of the drum and trumpets, and presents the Captain "all dawb'd with gold Lace," on a prancing and rearing horse bedecked with ribbons, flourishing his flaming sword, and then lowering it and kissing the hilt in obeisance to the Lady, who is looking down from her window, "dizen'd out like a Queen." The Lady invites the Captain to enter, and having curtsied "half way to the Ground," sends a servant to find Sir Arthur. After this sweep of colourful action, this grand beginning, the interrupted dialogue of which the rest of the scene consists is to the audience a comic anti-climax, as this fine-seeming hero and heroine reveal themselves to be threadbare of wit. Inviting the Captain to dinner, the Lady goes through the farce of apologising for the quality of the meal, and ("dizen'd out like a Queen," we remember) suggests she would have done better in spite of its being "the very Worst Time of the Year" if she "had expected so worthy a Guest." The Captain responds with similar nonsense. In the third and last imagined episode, Hannah presents the scene at the dinner table. First she makes us see the Captain in the place of honour, the jealous parsons, the goggling servants, and herself and Molly peeping from outside. Then the Captain's revealing thirty-line monologue begins. As we assess him from his own words we are at the same time conscious of the Dean's "grave looks" (147), and at the conclusion of the speech we also

see Hannah laughing "till [she] thought [she] shou'd split," the Lady looking "scornful, and swift at the Dean,/ As, who shou'd say, 'Now, am I Skinny and Lean?'," the Dean, not daring "so much as once open his Lips," and the Doctor, "plaguily down in the Hips" (174-178). Within the speech, the Captain has given us several inner scenes. He has invited his hearers to "observe how a Parson comes into a Room,/ G-- d-- me, he hobbles as bad as my Groom" (155-156). He has remembered his young days when "My School-Master call'd me a Dunce and a Fool," confessed "he expected no Good o'me," and finally "maul'd me" when "He caught me one Morning coquetting his Wife," (even though "at Cuffs I was always the Cock of the School"). And he has given us a glimpse of the sequel, when he "took to the Road," and "The first Man I robb'd was a Parson by G--" (163-170). To the world of the debate we have now added Hannah's world, and with it her imaginary Captain's. Hannah's speeches are long, but they are part of a dialogue with the Lady. The purely dramatic form of the debate is kept up. The Lady's contribution is to interrupt at intervals: "Go, bring me my Smock, and leave off your Prate,/ Thou hast certainly gotten a Cup in thy Pate;" (83-84) "Hist, Huzzy, I think I hear some Body coming." (127) Finally, the Dean enters the world of the debate, although not the debate itself, as he calls "Will your Ladyship walk?" and cuts short Hannah's eloquence. The debate scene concludes as the Lady tells the Dean she is "just coming down," and reprimands Hannah, belying the reprimand and the forced frown that accompanies it, however: "Come hither, and take this old Gown for your Pains." (186) Having enjoined Hannah to silence--for "the Dean, if this Secret shou'd come to his Ears,/ Will never have done with his Gibes and his Jeers"--she concludes, "Give me but a Barrack, a Fig for the Clergy." The Dean has

had no part in the debate. But in his only appearance in the world of the debate, he is, once more, showing concern for the Lady's welfare: he is making sure that she takes her daily exercise.

This complex of encompassing actions reflects in at least one respect the traditional world view represented in the concept of microcosm and macrocosm, for it constitutes an ordered universe, created by a controlling intelligence with a purpose. Swift creates the figure of the Dean to represent him in the world of the debate. Then from outside that world he directs the words and actions of his characters in such a way that although the Dean is made, behind his back, the butt of the three other characters in the world of the debate, and of the Captain in several of the inner worlds, we the audience see him as Swift wishes us to see him. He does this partly by his characterisation of the others; discrediting them, he defends the Dean against their judgments. His purposes seem to be complex. One may be the keeping up of his own end at Market Hill. But on one level at least the satire, directed to his own idiosyncracies as well as to the idiosyncracies of the others, is designed to amuse and instruct--by "a little gentle Jerking" to set "the Spirits all a working."²¹ As the Lady is the central character we assume that the satire is directed chiefly to her. In setting up her behaviour in dramatic form for her to see objectively, to laugh at, and ultimately to correct, Swift is acting like the Director of the play of life, Whose aim is not only to test but also to teach by means of His play.

The three-dimensional quality of the play-poem of encompassing actions makes it a particularly effective medium of instruction. In "The Grand Question Debated," the characters are involved simultaneously in horizontal action (in the world of the debate and in each of the inner worlds) and, to a greater or lesser extent, in vertical. Swift himself,

for example, makes us aware of his presence in the uttermost world as soon as we observe his irony. The presence of irony is evidence of the presence of the ironist. In his projection of himself as the Dean he participates in the world of the debate and in over half of the inner scenes. We are conscious of the relationships between these embodiments of himself that we may call Swift, the Dean as Swift sees him, and the Dean as Swift assumes others see him. In examining the characterisation we move vertically from one world to another. In considering the characterisation of the Lady we observe a similar pattern of horizontal and vertical action. Our impression of her comes in part directly from her behaviour and speech in the Swift-created world of the debate, in part from the version of her speech and behaviour given by her husband, with whom she disagrees, and in part from the version given by Hannah, whose attitudes please her. The Lady, however, also represents a real person, belonging with Swift to the world outside the poem. The instruction provided by the three-dimensional dramatisation by its sheer variety must have been stimulating. She could see at once beneath the comic exaggerations her essential self as she appeared to Swift in the real-life discussions upon which his plot is based. She could also see herself as he imagined her husband and her waiting-woman saw her. Further, she could assess these imagined views in the light of both Swift's and her own opinions of Sir Arthur and Hannah. And she could, of course, look at all these things in the light of her own opinion of Swift himself. The poet-dramatist has held up not one but many mirrors, and the Lady, seeing herself from as many angles, has a rare opportunity to know herself.

Other poems that demonstrate the stimulating instructional possibilities of the three-dimensional dramatisation include "My Lady's Lamen-

tation"²² and "Epistle to a Lady." In the latter poem, for example, Swift praises or appears to praise the lady's good points by putting a catalogue of them into her mouth, in the form of a defence against the Dean's criticisms, which she enumerates. He also accounts for the lady's bad points by having her make her own excuses. Instead of a simple dialogue, with Swift or the Dean addressing all praise and all blame directly to the lady, we have a much more involved situation, and in places an actually ambiguous one. For example, when Swift's Lady Acheson, "Bred a Fondling, and an Heiress," describes her fault-encouraging upbringing, we do not know whether he is excusing her, or presenting what he imagines she would say in her own defence, or doing both things simultaneously. We wonder, too, about that apparently complimentary catalogue of virtues. Is Swift praising the qualities he already perceives in the lady, or prompting her to acquire them, as one tells a child on the verge of tears what a brave boy he is to be making no fuss about his scraped knee?²³ Some details are suspicious ("When did ever I omit/ Due Regard for Men of Wit," for example). The catalogue is followed by another ambiguous passage in which the lady is made to defend her card-playing:

We, by Play, as Men by Drinking,
 Pass our Nights, to drive out thinking.
 From my Ailments give me leisure,
 I shall read and think with Pleasure. (85-88)

I think it is impossible to tell exactly how far Swift is being ironic in his attitude to this rationalisation. All this is the very stuff of theatre. Simultaneously we the audience see her faults and virtues from Swift's point of view (or from the point of view of the mentor character that he assumes) and from her own (as he imagines it), and we are left to weigh the evidence for ourselves--the evidence that is the creation of the writer. From the point of view of the lady addressed, or anyone who can

identify herself with the lady, this, too, is a lively and stimulating analysis, as likely as raillery to "Set [her] Thoughts upon their Mettle" (212).

The second group of poems with the pattern of encompassing actions consists of poems in which the gods are represented. Their very presence suggests the encompassing supernatural world from which human affairs are watched and influenced. Perhaps in such poems as "Strephon and Chloe" and "The Progress of Marriage" they are introduced for mock-heroic purposes,²⁴ but generally when they appear, even briefly, the gods have an essentially controlling function. There, on the whole, their resemblance to Providence ends. Although in some of the poems they preside over a testing or an exemplary moral action, Swift does not give to his pagan gods a function greater than Christian tradition allows. The poems in which they appear are indebted to the concept of microcosm and macrocosm more for form than for content.

"Cadenus and Vanessa" is the longest and most complicated of the poems in this group. The encompassing action²⁵ is a lawsuit. The poem begins with the dramatised first hearing of the case brought by the women against the men, and it ends with the final hearing, in which Venus pronounces in favour of the women. Within the framework of the two court scenes there is a series of scenes in which Venus works out the plan by which she intends to settle the dispute. We see her endowing the newborn Vanessa with all the gifts at her command, and tricking Pallas into endowing her further with the qualities generally given only to boys. We see the subsequent quarrel between the goddesses, and immediately afterwards, Vanessa's first full-scale sortie into "the World," in which she converses first with the fops and then with the women of fashion, who

please her as little as she pleases them. The rest of the internal action, including the most important scene of the poem, is, from the point of view of the encompassing action, not much more than an embellishment. In order to give Pallas the kind of pain Venus is suffering at the failure of her plan, Cupid causes Vanessa to fall in love. But the failure of the plan was all that was necessary to the working out of the encompassing action: Venus has already found out all she needs to know in order to decide the case.

In the last and most important of the inner scenes, Vanessa reveals her love and Cadenus responds to the revelation. This scene and the one that it balances, the scene of Vanessa and the fops and women of fashion, are inner scenes in another sense: they are the only ones set in the world of human beings, and the only ones in which the divinities who have set up the action take no part in it. These scenes may be contrasted with those of the outer action, in which human beings appear in the world of the gods and exist on the same plane of reality with them. But the human plaintiffs and defendants in the court scenes have been translated to fit into their heavenly environment: they have become the "Nymphs" and "Shepherds" that Greek mythology has made familiar to us as the companions of the gods, and although their thinking, like that of the gods, is human enough, they are far removed from the contemporary world of Cadenus and Vanessa and their acquaintances. Whereas the action of the earlier of the two scenes set in the human world is stylised, and the fops and women are types rather than individuals (vividly though they are presented), the action of the later scene and the characterisation of Cadenus and Vanessa are realistic. The characterisation in this later scene, however, is not consistently dramatic. Vanessa, indeed, comes to life as the result of

the meticulousness with which Swift makes us see and hear the encounter in all its detail and with all its nuances. But a non-dramatic element, Swift's analysis of thoughts, contributes as much as his presentation of speech to the verisimilitude of his characterisation of Cadenus. The reader's point of view is shifted, and ceasing to be an outsider²⁶ he observes the situation through Cadenus's eyes.

This non-dramatic element is present to some extent in other scenes of the inner action. We are admitted into Vanessa's mind when she is visited by the women of fashion. We are told that the shame which together with her rage and disdain showed itself in her silence (and presumably in her facial expression) was for both herself and her sex, and that it was "out of Spight" that she remained silent "Nor wou'd vouchsafe to set them right" (404-407). We are admitted also into the minds of Venus, Pallas and Cupid, especially in the longer passages between the dramatisations. Generally, the smaller units of dramatised action begin only after the character's motivation has been established, as for example when the poet tells us of Cupid's desire and plan for vengeance and then shows the god beginning to shoot the arrows that Cadenus wards off. This is perhaps not much more than to say that "Cadenus and Vanessa" is a poem, not a play. In the scenes of the outer action, however, non-dramatic elements are at a minimum.

In the first of these scenes there are no preliminaries: "The Shepherds and the Nymphs were seen/ Pleading before the Cyprian Queen." Thereafter, there are only two unmistakable interruptions of the dramatisation (1-117) by commentary, one when the poet tells us that the impudence of the defendant's counsel was "what no Lawyer ever lack'd" (23), and the other when he comments ironically on Venus's concern for loss of

face in Heaven: "For Gods, their Betters, are too wise/ To value that which Men despise" (83-84). Other comments, such as those on Tibullus, Cowley and Waller as authorities on love, are incorporated--or may be understood to be incorporated--in speeches of the characters within the poem. The poet supplies reminders that the action is being watched by an audience:

The Muses oft were seen to frown;
The Graces half asham'd look'd down;
And 'twas observed, there were but few
Of either Sex, among the Crew,
Whom she or her Assessors knew. (99-103)

The unfamiliarity of Venus, the Graces and the Muses with most of the litigants was to be deduced entirely from their demeanour. Even when the poet mentions a character's feelings, his main purpose, apparently, is to suggest how he looks. "The Graces half asham'd look'd down," (100) and "The Nymphs in Scorn beheld their foes," (21)--these are stage directions. In the final scene, there is a particularly telling example:

The Judge discover'd in her Face
Resentments for her late Disgrace;
And, full of Anger, Shame, and Grief,
Directed them to mind their Brief. (844-847)²⁷

It is clear, then, that the outer action is more consistently play-like than both the inner action of Venus's experiment and the inner scenes set in the eighteenth century world of Cadenus and Vanessa. It is clear, too, that if Swift draws upon the traditions of microcosmography in his presentation of the gods, it is for form rather than content. Venus is judge of the behaviour of men and women, but she is not the creator of the situation in which the judgment has to be made. The initiative has come from the women. It is only when she is unable to decide the cause that Venus establishes a test by creating Vanessa and judging the defendants (though not, apparently, the plaintiffs) according to their response

to the near-perfect girl. Venus herself may have in part a God-like function, but she has little resemblance to Providence. Having given judgment against the men, she washes her hands of the whole affair, handing over the business of love between men and women to her son, to whom, as we have seen from the way he used Cadenus and Vanessa, people are mere puppets to be manipulated for his own purposes. Irresponsibly,²⁸ Venus departs, leaving "all below at Six and Seven." She has already shown herself to be a human goddess, asking the litigants to speak low in case other gods overhear and laugh at her when they learn of her loss of influence. Human affairs, however, are to a great extent in the hands of these divinities. Vanessa is born "wondrous"--though even her birth is "Produc'd" by "Lucina's Aid"--but all her qualities of body, spirit and mind are implanted by Venus and Pallas (and we remember that Swift actually uses the metaphor of seeds).²⁹ Furthermore, her creation and preservation as an almost perfect woman are effected for Venus's own clear purpose. Here Venus does resemble Providence. The purpose was not only to test men and women and to find out which were at fault in the dispute, but also to instruct women: "Womankind," Venus hoped, "Wou'd by her Model form their Mind" (236-237). Pallas is responsible for Cadenus's closeness to Vanessa in the first place: she had actually appointed him to share her work as tutor to the child. But the most important event that befalls the two main human characters happens as the merely incidental result of what the gods are doing to one another. Vanessa's falling in love with Cadenus is entirely engineered by Cupid, as an act of spite against Pallas. Unaided human beings are not entirely helpless, however. Cupid's earlier attempts to make Vanessa fall in love are frustrated by Cadenus.³⁰ And not everything that happens to the human characters is engineered by the

gods. Pallas sees that she need take no action to make Venus's plan fail: it is founded on the false premiss that man and woman must needs love the highest when they see it, and thus it carries the seeds of its own failure.

It is obvious, in fact, that although many of the elements of microcosmology are present in "Cadenus and Vanessa," they are not arranged in a microcosmologically significant pattern. It is also obvious that the inner scene of Vanessa's declaration, unnecessary to the working out of what seems to be the main plot of the dramatisation, is the most important part of the poem. As soon as we consider Swift's probable motivation, we see an obvious explanation of the obvious fact that far from being governed in this poem by the concepts underlying microcosmography he is subordinating its forms to his own purpose. He wishes to exonerate both Vanessa and himself from blame for what has happened to their relationship. At least when the poem was first composed, it is probable that he wanted gracefully to evade Vanessa's advances, and not only to avoid hurting her but also to delight her by the compliment through which his evasion was effected. The inner scene, in fact, is his real starting point, from which he builds outward, creating the encompassing world of the controlling gods entirely for the sake of giving a comforting interpretation of the bald facts dramatised in that inner scene. It is not surprising, therefore, that in this poem the microcosmic structure has no theological implications. If we tried to read such implications into it, we should lead ourselves into the impossible position of suggesting also that Swift, in his fable about the multiferous and therefore not omnipotent gods, is burlesquing the pattern of the divine order itself.

In several other poems Swift builds outwards from a dramatised

incident or occasion, creating round it an encompassing world inhabited by the gods, whose power and position in that world make them fitting instruments by which to co-ordinate and unify the untidy or unconnected facts of the real-life situation at the heart of the fable. He does this in "Apollo to Dean Swift," for example. On a window of the Deanery, Delany has written two verses about the Dean's hospitality, into the second of which he has introduced the character of Apollo as the Dean's patron who lives in the house and is left by Swift to provide solid nourishment for guests, with the result that although the Dean provides good wine, the only other fare consists of inspiring thoughts. Here Delany sets the pattern, creating an outer world of the gods to account for events in the human world. Swift, however, develops the idea further and makes fuller use of its dramatic possibilities. The outer framework of "Apollo to Dean Swift" is a monologue in the form of a letter or a proclamation. Swift wants to keep up the joke, to let Delany know he knows who wrote the verses, to answer him, to compliment him and to compliment Stella. He unifies these elements by extending the scope of the action to include them all, and he does this by including Apollo and his sister in the dramatis personae. From the encompassing world of the gods (and the literally encompassing sphere of the sky) the moon goddess witnesses the writing of the verses on the north window that the sun never sees. Reading them by means of the reflection of the window in Stella's eyes, she recognises the idea as Apollo's and transcribes the verses. All this Apollo reveals to Swift in his monologue, which begins with his sardonic comments on those who claim that he inspires them. By this beginning Swift paves the way for the compliment to Delany. The gods can easily identify the writer of the "pirated" poem, for "Who but Delany could write like Apollo?" (88). Here is a poet who can rightly

claim to have got his poetry from the god! In the birthday poem to Stella written in 1723, Swift similarly unifies his difficulty in writing the verses and the digging up of an old bottle of wine. He sets the two elements in the world presided over by Apollo, who refuses to inspire Swift but directs him to the earth god's priestess (Mrs. Brent) who will be his means of access to the bottle and the inspiring draught it contains. In "The First of April," Swift compliments Mrs. Robert Cope by inventing a fable in which he places her little world within the world of the gods. In the outer scene, Apollo plays an April Fool trick on the Muses by telling them to take into their care the children they will find in the "Cabbín" at which they are looking. They realise that this is a joke when they, like us, have looked at the scene within and have observed the mother of the family so lovingly, happily and capably going about her tasks.

On one occasion, the encompassing and co-ordinating world of the gods does not appear until the end of a poem. "A Panegyrick on the Dean," vividly play-like in some respects, is more loosely organised and less well-shaped than other dramatic poems. The dramatic framework is the monologue of the Lady of the North, within which there is a series of lively scenes in which we see the Dean in his several roles. The dramatic balance is lost, however, when the Lady is made to try her hand at "fine" writing, in the passage in praise of Cloacine. The length of this passage, and the tenuousness of its connection with the substance and form of the mock panegyric on the Dean, destroy the pattern and proportions established in the earlier part of the poem. In it, too, the characterisation of the Lady is not kept up. The reflections on mortality and pretentiousness that underlie the scatological wit, and the erudition of

that wit are beyond the capabilities of the "Savage bred and born" (131), who, although she has "almost learn't to spell" (134) under the Dean's instruction, is still on occasions "duller than a post" (138). In this part of the poem, the real speaker is clearly Swift himself. The world of the gods (represented chiefly by Cloacine) is introduced here, it seems, in the cause of mock-heroics. Immediately afterwards, however, when the Lady mentions Pheobus's having spoken to her in a dream, Swift creates briefly an encompassing world and the divine personage who attempts to direct her. From the point of view of the dramatisation, the effect is to re-establish the personality of the Lady and thus to restore the balance of the poem. But if Swift's use of the device is deliberate, it may be perfunctory here. It is certainly ambiguous. Through it, the rationalising Lady is made to justify her failure to aim higher "Than what befits a rural Dame." But at the same time, Phoebus, god of poetry, is voicing Swift's rebuke to the Lady for the pride and vanity that underlie her taste for pretentiousness in verse.³¹

NOTES ON CHAPTER 9

¹C. J. Horne comments upon Swift's "rare ability to observe physical objects as in themselves they are, and to depict them in all their physicality" (Horne, 1977). E. San Juan notes his "sense of the immediate, the acute responsiveness to concrete actuality, the energetic control exercised over elements of immediate sensory experience" (San Juan, 387). See also Edmund Wilson, in "Cousin Swift, You Will Never Be a Poet," in Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 698; and Desmond E.S. Maxwell, "Poetic Inception," in American Fiction: The Intellectual Background (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 22. Both Wilson and Maxwell single out the description of Stella's return to Ormond Quay to illustrate their comments. A complete list of critical references to Swift's concrete imagination would be long indeed.

²"Don Carlos," 35-40 and 51-52.

³See page 93 above.

⁴Delany agrees with Orrery that Swift "told a story remarkably well. . . . And let me add," he says, "that the most effectual way of paying court to him, was to listen with attention; altho' he sometimes told them too often." On one occasion, when Dr. Helsham "seemed to be somewhat absent when the Dean was speaking, he stopt short and cried out: I'd give ~~50~~ 50 that you were as good a listener as Dr. Delany." (Delany, pp. 218-219) Sheridan claims that Swift "kept every friend, and I believe every man living that he conversed with, in some degree of awe" (Sheridan, p. 18).

⁵Concern with the particular is consistent with the attitude shown in Swift's letter to Pope of September 29, 1725: "I have ever hated all nations, professions and communities, and all my love is towards individuals." (Correspondence, III, 103) Although in its context the comment suggests that he dislikes people themselves when they are in groups, the exaggeration in the first clause warns us against taking it too literally. He seems more likely to mean that he hates the idea of groups, possibly because of the generally debasing effect of group thinking, and possibly because those who think of others in groups quickly slip into glib and dangerous generalisations and lose touch with the human reality.

⁶Venus's design fails, however, "For great Examples are but vain/
Where Ignorance begs Disdain" (436-437).

⁷"To Stella, Visiting Me", 33-34 and 117.

⁸Thomas Beard, The Theatre of God's Judgements (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1597), p. A3.

⁹Pierre Boaistuaau, Le Theatre Du Monde. . . . Nouvellement imprimé (A Londres, De L'Imprimerie de Geor. Bishop, 1595), p. 4.

¹⁰In thus proceeding from exemplum to explicitly stated lesson, of course, Swift follows a long rhetorical tradition. That his exemplum in this case takes the form of a dramatisation reminds us of the close relationship between the pulpit or the rostrum and the stage. In a number of the poems, most of which are outside the scope of our study, he follows a similar pattern: first he presents us with an episode (often an episode from mythology), and then he draws a moral or makes an analogy. Examples include "A Receipt to Restore Stella's Youth," "Vanbrug's House (1703)," and the poem "On the Words--Brother Protestants, and Fellow Christians, so familiarly used by the Advocates for the Repeal of the Test Act in Ireland, 1733." See also C. J. Horne's essay, already cited.

¹¹In many epochs and many cultures the social group has long used dramatisation as a method of asserting its moral code and of punishing those who deviate from it. Here we are reminded, for example, of the "skimmity ride" described by Thomas Hardy in The Mayor of Casterbridge. In the motivation of such secular performances, of course, moral concern is often of secondary importance. The main object of the exercise is the assertion of group strength and unity, and the mood is hostile, revengeful and cruel as well as derisive. Such dramatisations often had more in common with the show at the tail of the Roman triumph than with the play in the "Theatre of God's judgment."

¹²"By dramatic," says Smith, "I mean Swift's conscious use of such devices as dialogue, impersonation, mimicry, and scene development." (Smith, 335)

¹³See pages 60-64 above.

¹⁴Greene takes a different view. "The order of these disasters is significant, ascending from the least evil--in the eyes of Peter and Cassinus--Caelia's death, to the greatest, the mortifying betrayal of Cassinus with someone as low in the social scale as the barber's boy." (Greene, p. 675)

¹⁵"Cadenus and Vanessa," 561-817.

¹⁶I cannot agree with A. B. England's assertions, in "World Without Order: Some Thoughts on the Poetry of Swift," Essays in Criticism, 16 (1966), p. 42, that "Mrs. Harris's Petition" is shapeless, and that "Abandoning order in the progression of thought, Swift also abandons order in the structure of his verse."

¹⁷See page 194 above.

¹⁸Smith notices "Swift's creation of a complex of dramatic arenas or "worlds" in the Journal to Stella," and adds, "One could draw these dramatic worlds as concentric circles," of which he specifies three.

¹⁹If he made the place a barrack, he would become landlord to the Crown. Then he might have to choose between being underpaid and joining "with the Court in ev'ry debate." Rather than do this, he says, "I would lose my Estate" (19-24).

²⁰See pages 156-160 above.

²¹"Epistle to a Lady," 205-206.

²²See the discussion of this poem on pages 156-160 above.

²³Cf. page 124 above.

²⁴See the descriptions of the marriage rites in both these poems. See also pages 68-69 above, and note 17 on Chapter 2.

²⁵Tyne calls it an "envelope framework" (Tyne, 519).

²⁶He does remain outside, of course, in retaining his ability to judge Cadenus.

²⁷The underlining is mine.

²⁸Tyne does not blame her. "As though realizing that even she cannot bring about a satisfactory detente in the perennial battle of the sexes, the goddess of love prudently entrusts "all Business to her Son" (Tyne, p. 532).

²⁹See page 38 above.

³⁰Ohlin notes that not even Cupid himself can make anyone fall in love with Vanessa (Ohlin, p. 491).

³¹In this poem the rebuke is administered through the fiction that she is the creator of pretentious and hyperbolic verse; but it is basically the same rebuke as the one administered in "Epistle to a Lady," where she is presented as the would-be-recipient of such verse. Cf. page 71 above.

IV
DRAMATIC DEVICES, FORMS AND IMAGERY

CHAPTER 10
FURTHER ECHOES OF A TRADITION

Elizabethan and later drama may have had little effect on Swift's dramatisations, but in some of them there is evidence that he may have been influenced by the earlier drama of the morality play. As we observed in our introductory chapter, the concept of man as the little world, the concept of the world as a stage on which a man performs the part allotted to him by God and is judged on his performance, and the concept of the directing of the play of life by Providence are nowhere more clearly exemplified than in the morality plays. And it is entirely appropriate that these concepts should literally have been dramatised, because the other concept belonging to the group is that the stage itself is a microcosm of the world. It will be recalled that the first part of The Castle of Perseverance deals with Mankind's struggle for salvation, beset by the Seven Deadly Sins and the Devil himself. We can tell from the action and the personages involved that the real setting of this part of the play is the mind of Mankind, in which his self, or soul, or vital spark, personified as Mankind the protagonist, is tempted or tested. In "The Journal of a Modern Lady," the coming together of certain significant elements suggests that Swift is, consciously or unconsciously, writing in the tradition to which The Castle of Perseverance belongs. In this poem, all the faults satirised by Swift are manifestations of the deadly sins that lead the Modern Lady away from salvation: the sloth that shows itself not only in her late rising and her lateness in most of the other activities of the day but also in the way she fills her time with wholly unproductive

activity; the pride that shows itself in her vanity about her appearance and dress; the greed that underlies her gambling fever and makes her ready to pawn "her Snuff-box, Rings, and Keys" and to appropriate the money her "Husband left to pay for Coals" in order to pay her gambling debts and keep her place among the gamblers; the anger she displays when she loses and quarrels with her opponents; the envy, hatred and malice that pervade her scandal-mongering. Incidentally, Swift makes the squabbling and cheating card-players seem less than human when he applies to them a word more usually associated with savage beasts: they "snarl" (281) over their game.

The poem is clearly play-like. Not only are the episodes of the day presented in rounded scenes rich with dialogue. Swift gives emphasis to their dramatic form by his explicit imagery--"Now to another Scene give Place" (80), and "At Table now she acts her Part,/ Has all the Dinner-Cant by Heart" (100-101)--and by his constant reminders that what he is presenting is a spectacle.¹ He will "shew" us that the lady is "By Nature turn'd to play the Rake-well" (36-37), "You see the Booby Husband sit/ In Admiration at her Wit!" (114-115), "But let me now a while survey/ Our Madam o'er her Evening Tea" (116-117), "But see, the Female Club disbands" (196). Even in his syntax he maintains a sense of immediacy, by presenting the whole action in the present tense, and by using the appropriate adverb frequently: "now" is used twelve times.

In the greater part of the poem, the presentation is realistic. We perceive the sins of the women through their words and actions. But near the middle of the poem the mode of dramatisation changes: we are suddenly made aware of the presence among these realistically presented women of the personified virtues and vices that could have come directly

from the allegorical drama.² First,

frighted at the clam'rous Crew,
Away the God of Silence flew,
And fair Discretion left the Place,
And Modesty with blushing Face. (120-123)

Then come the Vices, heralded by an unmistakable stage direction:

Now enters over-weening Pride,
And Scandal ever gaping wide,
Hypocrisy with Frown severe,
Scurrility with gibing Air;
Rude Laughter seeming like to burst;
And Malice always judging worst;
And Vanity with Pocket-Glass;
And Impudence with Front of Brass;
And studied Affectation came,
Each Limb, and Feature out of Frame;
While Ignorance, with Brain of Lead,
Flew hov'ring o'er each Female Head. (124-135)

We note that the characterising attribute of every personification except Malice and Ignorance is one that can be seen. It is perhaps significant that in this scene the satirist-moralist's personality obtrudes for the first time since the introduction, as he apostrophises first his muse and then the "foolish Females," admonishing them:

Say, by what fatal Turn of Mind,
Are you on Vices most severe
Wherein yourselves have greatest Share? (151-153)

Their vices may indeed be "fatal". As this scene draws to a close, in a din of chatter, we notice that at the climax of a comic crescendo of comparisons³ Swift's mind continues to run on the macrocosmic setting of the little world of his stage and on the correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm. The whole of the Modern Lady's sin-ridden, time-wasting life runs counter to the divine order. The correspondence of her chatter is disorder itself, but the chatter is the worse: "The Jumbling Particles of Matter/ In Chaos made not such a Clatter." (184-185)

We are reminded briefly of the personification characters from

Christian allegorical drama in "A Panegyrick on the Dean." In the apostrophe to Cloacine, Swift describes Gluttony

with greasy Paws.
Her Napkin pinn'd up to her Jaws,
With wat'ry Chaps, and wagging Chin,
Brac'd like a Drum her oily Skin;
Wedg'd in a spacious Elbow-Chair,
And on her Plate a treble Share. (255-260)

With Gluttony is her brood, including "lolling Sloth in Woollen Cap,/ Taking her After-dinner Nap" (273-274). Gluttony corrupted "harmless Man" (262), and together with her evil progeny made his natural act of excretion disgusting.⁴ In several of the poems to Stella, too, we can detect a possibly significant association of ideas and the possible influence of the morality. In "To Stella, Visiting Me," we are first reminded of the outer world of the gods and of their watchfulness over human affairs. Pallas, acting "In high Concern for human Kind," fixes honour in Stella's "Infant Mind." (5-6) A few lines later, the idea of the exemplary action on the stage of the world appears: "Let Stella's fair Example preach/ A Lesson she alone can teach." (33-34) The advice that immediately follows contains a reminder of the testing pattern: "In Points of Honour to be try'd,/ All Passions must be laid aside." (35-36) In his elaboration and explanation of this advice, his mention of the passions, by which he at first appears to mean personal considerations, leads him into a morality-like dramatisation of the conflict between honour and the vices in the human heart. If Stella fails to be impartial in judging what it is right for her to do, she must

relapse to Human Kind:⁵
Ambition, Avarice, and Lust,
And factious Rage, and Breach of Trust,
And Flatt'ry tipt with nauseous Fleece,
And guilty Shame, and servile Fear,
Envy, and Cruelty, and Pride,
Will in your tainted Heart preside. (44-50)

In "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems," the possible echoes of the morality are fainter. But when Stella's "Spirits kindle to a Flame,/ Mov'd with the lightest Touch of Blame," and her anger hardens into resentment and perverseness, the struggle between the virtues and vices is joined in the microcosmic stage of her mind:

Truth, Judgment, Wit, give place to Spite,
Regardless both of Wrong and Right.
Your Virtues, all suspended, wait
Till Time hath open'd Reason's Gate. (93-96)

Again, in the last birthday poem to Stella, Swift's reference to "Vice, in all its glitt'ring Dress" (48) gives a brief reminder of his readiness to personify and to think of the elements of moral conflict in dramatic terms.

This poem, however, reminds us most strongly of the allegorical drama by its resemblance, not in details but in actual structure, to one morality in particular. Stella has been summoned by Death. The thoughts that Swift addresses to her follow a generally similar course to that of the events of Everyman. In the first part of the play, as the protagonist tries to persuade Fellowship, Cousin, Kindred and Goods to accompany him, he is still thinking in the context of the life he is about to leave. Swift does not dwell upon the change in attitude that has become necessary for Stella and himself, but he does refer to it, immediately before he begins to prepare her to think of the only part of her mortal life that relates to the future as well as to the past:

Although we now can form no more
Long Schemes of Life, as heretofore;
Yet you, while Time is running fast,
Can look with Joy on what is past. (15-18)

The dying man, it seems, must eventually go on alone. As Everyman nears death, first his companions fall back, then his beauty, his strength, his

discretion, his faculties, and finally his consciousness. There is perhaps an echo of this process in Swift's gentle shift from "we" to "you". But Everyman does have one companion to go with him to the grave and beyond, a companion upon whose evidence he will be judged by God and forgiven: his Good Deeds. Here is the heart of the play's lesson.⁶ The attribute of Stella that Swift dwells upon for sixty of the poem's eighty-eight lines is her virtue.⁷ He speaks of its manifestation in the good deeds she has done in her "Life well spent" (emulating Providence itself in her continued preservation of the lives she has saved), and of the endurance of its effects through mortal change. The passage concludes with the clearest echo of the penultimate part of Everyman:

Believe me Stella, when you show
That true Contempt for Things below,
Nor prize your Life for other Ends
Than merely to oblige your Friends;
Your former Actions claim their Part,
And join to fortify your Heart.
For Virtue in her daily Race,
Like Janus, bears a double Face;
Looks back with Joy where she has gone,
And therefore goes with Courage on.
She at your sickly Couch will wait,
And guide you to a better State. (67-78)

To guide, Virtue must go before; Stella will not face death alone.

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When we examine the stage imagery used in the poetry, we find, predictably, that the full range of Swift's attitudes to the theatre is reflected in it. Remembering that so much in the contemporary theatre was distasteful to him, we are not surprised to find that in some of his imagery it is the illusion-creating and deceptive aspects of theatrical presentation to which he refers. Acting a part is associated with affectation, pretence, simulation and dissimulation. The modern lady who "acts her Part"⁸ at table is not really ashamed of the fare for which she is

apologising. The Dean's "female Friends" who put on a brief show of grief at hearing of his death have learned better than the men "to act their Parts."⁹ Daphne's smiling demeanour is actually treacherous; fiercely the poet exclaims:

Send me hence ten thousand miles
From a face that always smiles:
None could ever act that part,
But a Fury in her heart.¹⁰

Even as Swift, writing of Carteret as virtue personified in "The Birth of Manly Virtue," links stage imagery with other elements from the micro-cosmographic complex,¹¹ he does not forget the deceptive properties of the actor's mask. Carteret was what "he wished to seem," and scorned the "mean Disguise." The poet comments in an aside: "Give fraudulent Vice the Mask and Screen,/ Tis Virtue's Int'rest to be seen." (79-80). In "The Lady's Dressing Room," the "scene" represents a false appearance of the desirable and the beautiful that masks a squalid reality: "To him that looks behind the Scene,/ Satira's but some pocky Quean." (133-134). Satira's name emphasises the irony of the contrast between appearance and reality. In "Strephon and Chloe," there appears at first to be some confusion of thought underlying Swift's use of stage imagery. He uses it to condemn the mere appearance of the fair and wholesome, admonishing wives "to study to be clean," for "Husbands get behind the Scene" (137-138). But later in the poem he appears to be using stage imagery to advocate the keeping up of illusion, to suggest that the very act of getting behind the scene is fatal to love. "Why," he asks,

is a handsome Wife ador'd
By ev'ry Coxcomb, but her Lord?
From yonder Puppet-Man inquire,
Who wisely¹² hides his Wood and Wire;
Shews Sheba's Queen completely drest,
And Solomon in Royal Vest. (283-288)

But as the analogy continues, we recognise in this second image an allusion to one of the major commonplaces of the world-stage metaphor:

But, view them litter'd on the Floor,
Or strung on Pegs behind the Door;
Punch is exactly of a Piece
With Lorraine's Duke and Prince of Greece. (289-292)

When, at the end of the play of life, the robes are laid aside, the clown and the prince (in the words of Professor Aubrey Williams) "go alike naked to the grave--and to judgment."¹³ Far from being inconsistent, Swift is here, perhaps, reminding us once more of the humanity of man, and suggesting that marriage, like death, is a great leveller. The husband does not "adore" his wife, because he has, in the words of the first image, got "behind the Scene," and he has seen her as she is. We may be reminded in passing that he should not, indeed, "adore" a fellow human being. As the poem concludes, the poet advises human lovers to found their passion, not on the perishable attributes of beauty and youth, but on "Sense and Wit," "Decency," "Prudence," and "Good Nature." In such a relationship, the wife will present her husband with no unpleasing contrast between seductive finery and hidden filth.

Of Swift's theatrical imagery derived from the concept of the world as a stage, not all is particularly significant. As we observed in the introductory chapter,¹⁴ the concept was a commonplace, and the images connected with it were already embedded in the language long before Swift's time. Although for Swift the concept retains much of its original significance and is a living reality, simply in using the language of his contemporaries he frequently employs the metaphors in their fossilised form. In considering the theological implications of his stage imagery, then, we must disregard all of the examples in which "scene" denotes little more than a location, as when "Jove sent and found far in a Country Scene,/"

Truth, Innocence, Good Nature, Look serene,"¹⁵ and all in which "playing a part" denotes merely participating in an action, as, for example, when the Graces "act their Part"¹⁶ in endowing Vanessa with beauty. Admittedly in this case the metaphor occurs in an obvious dramatisation, but except possibly as evidence of an association of ideas it seems to have no special significance, and it is too colourless to be particularly interesting.

Much of Swift's stage imagery, however, does appear to be connected significantly both with the idea of the world as a stage and the concepts related to it, and with his dramatising. In his most lively dramatisations, he uses stage images that have the effect of drawing attention to what he is doing, although they may well have come to him naturally in such a context, without premeditation or conscious purpose. He begins the second section of "My Lady's Lamentation" with "Now, changing the scene,/ But still to the Dean" (87-88). In "A Panegyrick on the Dean," the Lady of the North, in her masque-like catalogue of the Dean's several roles in her household, leads him "to a nobler Scene" (86) when she presents him as butler's mate, and introduces him in another role with "Now, enter as the Dairy Hand-maid" (167). Here the metaphors are obviously appropriate also to the subject. At the end of "An Apology to the Lady C-R-T," his use of "scene" is particularly noteworthy. It is the key word in the Doctor's long speech, used near the beginning of it and repeated at the end, so that repetition of the word and the idea it represents emphasises the parallel Swift is drawing. If the Lady, unaccustomed to the sequestered out-door rural life, is "startled at a Scene so rude" (135) as Naboth's Vineyard, can she find it strange if the Doctor, long exiled from Court, "eschew[s]/ A Scene so glorious and so new" (163-164) as the court at Dublin Castle? In itself, "scene" here

has a multiple function. Referring literally to the setting of the action, it also brings to mind the action itself. But the settings are spheres in life, and the action is the performance of the Doctor and the Lady in their assigned roles. "Scene" reminds us that the action has been dramatised, that the poet-mentor has fulfilled his role by using the method of God Himself in setting up the play from which his pupil may learn. Playing, perhaps, upon all these associations of "scene", Swift reinforces his message, directing Lady Carteret's attention (and ours) to the stage of the world, on which she must live up to the demands of her exacting part.

There are one or two passages in the poems, too, in which stage imagery is linked in an association of ideas with other elements from the microcosmographic complex. We discussed one such passage, from "The Birth of Manly Virtue," in the previous chapter.¹⁷ At the end of "The Progress of Love" there is another example, in which we are told that "Fate put a Period to the Farce" of the "romance" of the ill-matched John and Phillis—"And with exact Poetic Justice." "The Journal" provides the most outstanding example: the associated ideas pervade the whole poem. At the outset, the invocation to Thalia prepares both for the dramatic treatment of the daily routine and for the allusions to the play of life at Gaulstown upon which at the end of each day "the Curtain falls" (60), and in which, the narrator tells us, the action of the comfortable daily routine is interspersed with minor mishaps, "Like Episodes between the Acts" (62). Although the action is circumscribed, the play has a cosmic setting, suggested by a passage in which the party is described as assembling from the four elements:

From Airy Garrets some descend,
Some from the Lakes remotest end.
My Lord and Dean, the Fire forsake;
Dan leaves the Earthly Spade and Rake. (27-32)

Even the shape of microcosm and macrocosm is suggested, by "circle" (59), although the word is used simply to denote the cycle of the day. But it is when we relate these images and allusions to the prevailing thought of "The Journal"¹⁸ that we realise their force. Swift focuses attention by addressing his reader directly, and then makes an explicit statement of the central idea of the poem:

you, who are a Scholar, know
How transient all things are below:
How prone to change in human life. (115-117)

Life in the sheltered little world of Gaulstown may be, for the most part, light-hearted and pleasant. The small failures and misfortunes of the participants may be amusing; but they are nevertheless reminders of the precariousness of their state. Even this little play is presided over by its Author and Director. Even in its least assuming moments, human life is contingent upon Providence.

We cannot conclude this discussion without examining the one poem in which Swift makes an explicit statement of the comparison of the world to a stage. "Mad Mullinix and Timothy" is a dialogue, actually set out in dramatic form, with the name of the speaker set off to the left of every speech. The poem is primarily an attack upon Richard Tighe.¹⁹ At the climax of the first lively exchange between Mullinix and Timothy, the mad beggar tells the Jacobite-hunting politician that he is mistaken in thinking himself the Tories' scourge; on the contrary, "You are their Delight," he tells Timothy, "And should you act a diff'rent Part,/ Be grave and wise, 'twou'd break their Heart" (88-90). In some detail Mullinix reminds Timothy of the antics of Punch in the puppet plays, describing both the action²⁰ and the audience's reaction to it. Then he draws his analogy:

Thus, Tim, Philosophers suppose,
 The World consists of Puppet-shows;
 Where petulant, conceited Fellows
 Perform the part of Punchinelloes;
 So at this Booth, which we call Dublin,
 Tim thou'rt the Punch to stir up trouble in. (133-138)

Explicit though the reference is, the satirical use of the figure and the element of parody suggested by the substitution of a puppet-show for the drama on the stage of the world make it at first appear that Swift is interested in the form rather than the spirit of the world-stage analogy. What he says of the spectators seems to bear out this impression; they are not there to be enlightened.

How well are the Spectators pleas'd!
 Who in the motion have no share;
 But purely come to hear, and stare;
 Have no concern for Sabra's sake
 Which gets the better, Saint, or Snake.
 Provided Punch (for there's the Jest)
 Be soundly mawl'd, and plagues the rest. (126-132)

Furthermore, Timothy's eventual decision to change his ways is not the result of a change of heart. He will no longer

strut, and stair, and stink,
 Revile and slander, fume and storm,
 Betray, make Oath, impeach, inform (166-168),

but only because he is at last convinced that he has been wasting his "precious breath" and making himself the Tories' "may-game". He would rather hang himself "Than give those Rascals cause to laugh." His motives for undertaking his new part are no better. Unable to "endure/ Once so renoun'd to Live obscure" (179-180), he submits himself to Mullinix's instruction so that he may learn how to win the kind of renown the mad beggar enjoys. Mullinix first assures him his "Parts are good," and wishes "They had been well apply'd," then he tells him how to "Adapt [his] Habit to [his] Phiz,"²¹ and points out that when they are "Drest alike from Top to Toe,/ . . . which is which, 'tis hard to know" (227-228). Beneath the

joke against Tighe (who, it is implied, is already indistinguishable from a madman in his behaviour), there is, perhaps, another allusion to the play on the stage of the world: the politician and the mad beggar (like Lear's justice and thief) owe their widely separated positions in the world to their trappings, not to their natures. After this brief reminder that when the play is over and the costumes are doffed, the actor who played the great man will be judged on exactly the same terms as the man who played the beggar,²² Swift continues to present Mullinix as dramatic coach to Timothy, although he does not actually use any stage metaphor. "Be studious well to imitate/ My portly Motion, Mien, and Gate," Mullinix tells Timothy; "Mark my Address, and learn my Style" (233-235). When Timothy is ready, the pair will

in the streets divert the City
The Ladies from the windows gaping:
The Children all our motions Aping (240-242).

But the pupil must be coached in speech as well as bearing. Timothy's "Conversation to refine" (243), Mullinix will take him to his friends, the chimney sweeps, the street cleaners, the gaolers and the porters who "Scorn, for want of talk, to jabber/ Of Parties o're [their] Bonny-Clabber" (259-260). Because Mullinix, in teaching Timothy to act the part of mad beggar, has prepared him to replace one comic role with another, we are ready to find the conversation he is invited to imitate ridiculous, too. "Refine", we suppose, is used ironically. At this point, however, the relationship between the poet, Mullinix, and the reader becomes more complex. In the cause of deflating Tighe, Swift makes Mullinix's description of the "choice Spirits" a vehicle for sarcasm.²³ Their work is made to sound grander than it is. The sweeps, for example, "clean . . . hollow Tubes, to spy/ Direct the Zenith of the Sky" (247-248). Before we are given anti-climactic examples of their conversation, we are led to suppose

that they take a broad view and act from lofty principles in their choice of topics: their

Care is to improve the mind
With what concerns all human Kind,
The various scenes of mortal Life (263-265).

It is Tighe that Swift is disparaging ultimately, however, not the "choice Spirits." His ironic exaltation of their humble work and interests²⁴ debases them only so that Timothy, their inferior, will seem lower still. Simultaneously indeed, making Mullinix his mouth-piece, he is telling us of their superiority. Timothy has claimed that he "must pursue the publick Good" (74), but he has given himself away and revealed his true priorities: his "constant, Loyal Zeal" is "To serve [him]self and Commonweal," and, he admits, he has "damn[ed his] Soul to plague" his opponents (169-170 and 173). The "choice Spirits," on the other hand, are the real servers of their fellows, for they in their humble ways do "employ their Parts,/ To mend the World by useful Arts" (245-246). They are on firmer ground than Timothy, too, in their preoccupations with the problems of neighbours and with the price and availability of food--practical matters of everyday living in a community, and truly "what concerns all human kind." The labourers are no saints, but they are living out their human roles honestly. Timothy, on the other hand, is a pretentious and hypocritical self-seeker. The final speech Swift gives to Timothy is, again, ambiguous. Once more we see the poet ironically exalting the labourers in order to debase Timothy, and at the same time seriously suggesting their superiority. Timothy laments his "precious Time, so long mispent,/ By nature meant for nobler Ends," and exclaims to Mullinix:

O, introduce me to your friends!
For whom, by Birth, I was design'd,
'Till Politicks debas'd my mind. (277-282)

Beneath the satire against Tighe, in short, Swift reveals once more his concern with the design of the ordered universe. Timothy was indeed "meant for nobler Ends," and "by Birth . . . design'd" for the companionship of those who understand the human role on the stage of the world, those whose minds, unlike his, have not been "debas'd". Beneath the personal attack, Swift is reminding us that politics undertaken for the sake of personal power blind a man to his duty and deflect him from his proper purposes. In this most political of poems, he is making an assertion of the values that transcend politics, the values that have been his main concern in the poems about men and women that have been the subject of our study. And it is perhaps no accident that in doing so he makes such striking use of the imagery of the stage of the world, and that his vehicle is a dramatisation.

Believing as he did that the theatre of his own time was a poor place for a moralist, Swift the dramatist manqué had to divert his talent into other channels. Swift the orthodox Christian found the fullest expression of his dramatic powers in the poetry about fundamental human relationships, about the drama enacted in the theatre of God.

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¹Cf. page 207 above. See also "The Legion Club," in which Swift makes notable use of this device.

²They could, of course, have been suggested immediately by personifications used in non-dramatic works. They are strongly reminiscent, for example, of Milton's personifications in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." But the device is in itself a form of dramatisation, and it seems at least likely that if we could trace the use of personification to its ultimate beginnings, we should find that it spread from drama to non-drama, not in the other direction.

³This is followed by a comic anti-climax. See lines 189-190.

⁴In his analysis of the scatology of "A Panegyrick on the Dean," Jae Num Lee interprets this part of the poem in terms of symbolism rather than allegory: "The more corrupt [man] is in body and mind, the more unclean his excrement, therefore the more shameful to man as he strives to rise above his humble origin. . . . If man became more vile in body and mind as he became more sinful, offensive excrement is a symbol of his spiritual fall." (Jae Num Lee, p. 124)

⁵Here Swift seems to imply that although to be fully human man must direct the operation of his passions by means of his reason, it is so much more usual for his passions to "get astride" his reason that the name "human" is now debased; what it now denotes should properly be called "sub-human". But we must not wrest the phrase from its context. Swift is complimenting Stella, to soften his reproach, and perhaps also to shame her into the recognition of her failings. At her best, he suggests, she is in the topmost echelon of humanity; when she "relapse[s]", she joins the rank and file.

⁶Good Deeds regains the strength of which Everyman has robbed her by his neglect only when, through confession, penance, and contrition he has been restored to a state of grace. The good deeds emphasised in Everyman are the acts of repentance rather than the acts of goodness and kindness to others emphasised by Swift. But in general terms the comparison still stands. And as Professor Bowers has reminded me, Everyman does give alms. (Everyman, 11, 699-700)

⁷See Fischer's "The Uses of Virtue" for an exploration of the circumstances in which he did so.

⁸"The Journal of a Modern Lady," 100.

⁹"Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," 266.

¹⁰"To Daphne," 21-24.

¹¹See pages 185-186 above.

¹²The underlining is mine.

¹³The figure is used, for example, immediately after the passage we have quoted (page 186 above) from Pierre Boaistuau's dedication to Le Theatre du Monde:

Qu'est-ce autre chose que ce monde, sinon un Theatre, où les uns iouent l'estat des mechaniques, & de basse condition? Les autres representent les Roys, Ducz, Comtes, Marquis, Barons, & autres constituez en dignitez? Et toutesfois dès qu'ils ont tous posè leur masques, & que la mort vient qui met fin à ceste sanglante tragedie, ilz se recognoissent tous pour hommes.

One of the best-known applications of the figure occurs in Lear's reflections upon the "lendings" that alone differentiate him from Tom o' Bedlam, and the justice from the thief that he sentences.

¹⁴See page 12 above, and n. 34 on Introduction.

¹⁵"To Mistress Biddy Floyd," 3-4. If the virtues mentioned were personifications, "scene" might have more force. But they are merely ingredients used by the god in creating "the happy Composition, Floyd" (12).

¹⁶"Cadenus and Vanessa," 172.

¹⁷See pages 185-186 above.

¹⁸The poem is considered in relation to its background and explicated in depth by Aubrey Williams in "Swift and the Poetry of Allusion: 'The Journal'", in Literary Theory and Structure (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 227-243.

¹⁹For a brief account of Tighe and his activities, see the headnote to "Mad Mullinix and Timothy" (Williams, pp. 772-773).

²⁰We recognise the ancestry of some of the episodes in the still-surviving Punch and Judy show.

²¹By calling Tim's face a "Phiz", perhaps Swift is reminding us that (according to the "science" of physiognomy), Tim's face is already "adapted" to his mad and beggarly mind and character.

²²Cf. page 223 above, and n. 13.

²³The sarcasm cannot be Mullinix's, for he is speaking of his real friends.

²⁴In making Mullinix speak of these matters in the grand manner, perhaps Swift is also parodying Timothy's own self-important utterances, and suggesting once more that Timothy's "conversion" will mean merely the displacement of one form of pretentiousness by another.

APPENDIX

SWIFT AND THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

George Mayhew, I think, exaggerates when he claims that "Jonathan Swift's interest in the stage drama of his own era was almost as great as his concern with the history of his own times" (Mayhew, "Some Dramatizations of Swift's Polite Conversation (1738)," PQ, 44, 1965, p. 51). Although Swift's references and allusions to the contemporary theatre are frequent enough to suggest that theatrical matters did indeed engage a moderate share of his attention, indications of the liking and enthusiasm usually implied by "interest" are almost completely lacking, and there is much on the other hand to suggest that he viewed some things about the theatre with active dislike.

Harold Williams, followed by Frederik N. Smith, considers that the contents of Swift's library give a strong indication of his interest in the contemporary theatre. Swift possessed copies of the plays of Racine, Corneille and Molière, and a collection, "Le Théâtre Italien." But of the eight works or collections of works by the English dramatists represented in his library of six hundred books, at least two and probably four were presentation copies from their authors, and of the remaining four, two were incomplete at the time of his death and one was lost. (See Williams, Dean Swift's Library, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932, pp. 72-74. See also Smith, "Dramatic Elements in Swift's Journal to Stella," Eighteenth Century Studies, 1, 1968, p. 351.)

Even if we concede that Williams and Smith may be right in their assessment of Swift's reading tastes, however, we are hard put to find

much evidence of love of theatre in the few instances to be found of Swift's direct involvement in theatrical matters. In every case, his most obvious reason for being involved--supporting a good cause, obliging a friend, and so on--has little or nothing to do with the drama itself. Furthermore, on at least one of these occasions, when Swift actually mentions his own reading of plays, he displays signs of self-consciousness that make us wonder whether he has been involved with the drama despite a distaste for the theatre rather than because of an interest in it.

He never mentions going to the theatre. The only plays he mentions having attended were performed by school boys. In Letter LXII of the Journal to Stella, for example, he reports having gone to the Latin play at Westminster School--and we note that his patron Oxford also attended the performance (Journal, p. 645). Mayhew gives us a list of the plays performed by Sheridan's pupils in Dublin, and seen or possibly seen by Swift (Mayhew, pp. 56-57 and n.20). Swift would probably have patronised Sheridan's productions in any case, out of friendship.

He did on one occasion write specifically for the theatre, composing in 1721 an epilogue for a benefit performance for the distressed weavers of Dublin (see Williams, pp. 273-276). But remembering his campaign for the encouragement of Irish manufacture of textiles at this time, and his concern for the plight of the industry, we hardly need to account for his action in terms of interest in the theatre for its own sake. Furthermore, what he has to say in the poem about actors per se is hardly complimentary. Mayhew speaks of his "friendship" with Thomas Griffith, the actor who spoke the "Epilogue", and suggests that through Griffith he "kept in touch with the Dublin stage, and with the theatre Royal in particular" (Mayhew, p. 56).

But the only evidence of his "friendship" seems to be the fact that when Griffith, in 1735-36, was in difficulties with the law, he appealed to Swift for help. (See Correspondence, IV, 458-459.) Griffith's association with the Epilogue for the weavers' benefit, the fact that his troubles were partly the result of persecution by Sergeant Richard Bettsworth, one of Swift's bêtes noires, and Swift's known generosity towards the unfortunate are surely enough to account for the appeal and do not necessarily indicate any close ties with the theatre on Swift's part. In "Billet to the Players" (see Williams, pp. 306-309), he does indeed seem to show real interest in the affairs of the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, and in this poem he does seem to express approval of actors. But his chief aim is to comment upon the mean stratagem of the newly-appointed Master of the Revels, who has tried to raise the three hundred pounds granted to him as an increase in salary by demanding it as a fee from the theatre company for permission to act. Swift's poem is addressed to the actors, and, in his own words, "supposes, that, upon your being forbidden to act, a company of country strollers came and hired the Playhouse, and your cloaths & c. to act in." Through the mouth of a stroller, the player Thomas Elrington is praised, chiefly for his patriotism, his loyalty to his audience, and his resistance to political bullying. Admiration for the acting of Elrington, and the acting of Thomas Betterton and Robert Weeks (or Wilks), with whom he "has shone" (44), is also implied. We do not know, however, whether the stroller speaks for Swift. But if this is a tribute to people of the theatre, apart from references to Congreve and Gay, it stands alone.

Even about the reading of plays, Swift appears to have been self-conscious. In Letter XXXIII of the Journal to Stella, he writes:

I was all this terrible rainy day with my friend Lewis upon business of importance; and I dined with him, and came

home about seven, and thought I would amuse myself a little after the pains I had taken. I saw a volume of Congreve's Plays that Patrick had taken to read; and I looked into it, and in mere loitering read in it till twelve, like an owl and a fool: if ever I do so again; never saw the like. (Journal, p. 396)

We notice that he treats this reading as an indulgence, which he needs to justify, and that he is elaborately casual about the affair. The book was there because Patrick [his servant] had been reading it; he "looked into it;" he continued to read "in mere loitering." Finally, instead of a straightforward admission that he enjoyed the book, there is a shame-faced avowal of his folly in reading for so long by candle-light. Evidently he regards as frivolous even the plays of Congreve, to whom he had looked to reform the stage. (See "Ode to Mr. Congreve," Williams, pp. 43-50.) Remembering his references, in the poetry, to playbooks as the reading matter of the ignorant and the foolish, we may not be unduly surprised at his self-consciousness, especially in a letter to a "pupil". When he describes his attendance at a rehearsal of Joseph Addison's Cato, he reveals a greater self-consciousness, and perhaps its cause is more complicated. In Letter LXII of the Journal, he reports:

I was this morning at 10 at the Rehearsall of Mr. Addisons Play called Cato, which is to be acted on Friday, there were not above half a score of us, to see it; we stood on the Stage & it was foolish enough to see the Actors promptd every moment, & the Poet directing them, & the drab that Acts Catos daughter out in the midst of a passionate Part, & then calling out, What's next? Bp of Cl [George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher] was there too, but he stood privatly in a Gallery. (Journal, p. 654)

Swift evidently finds the whole business ridiculous and embarrassing, and no doubt his discomfort is increased by the necessity of hiding his feelings in front of his host, the author.

But it must in any case have been almost impossible at this time for an ambitious clergyman to feel at ease in a theatre (we notice that the

Bishop took care to keep out of sight). Quite apart from Swift's own attitude to the issues raised in the Collier controversy (and on the evidence of A Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners we must assume that he was on Collier's side), we must remember that in the furore that followed Collier's attack upon the theatre the Crown had come down heavily in favour of "reformation", and in the attempt to effect that reformation, the Crown, upon whom the clergyman's promotion must ultimately depend, had issued a series of edicts. If Addison's clerical guests remembered the decree of January 17, 1704, for instance, they may well have been ill at ease, even at a rehearsal. It includes these words: "We do hereby strictly command, that no person of what quality soever presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play." (See Montague Summers, The Restoration Theatre, London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1934, pp. 90-91.) School plays, indeed, may have been the only ones it was politically "safe" for a clergyman to attend.

However complicated the feelings underlying Swift's reaction to the rehearsal of Cato, it seems to me particularly significant that he feels so ill at ease, since this is perfectly in keeping with what we discover of his own role-playing in the poetry. Without the protective layers he always provides for himself in his own-role playing, without the shield of anonymity, in the company of a group of fellow spectators that is far too small to hide himself in, he is compelled to witness at close quarters a parade of violent and assumed passion, with all the crudities of the pretence exposed. Clearly, such direct contact with the business of histrionics is an uncomfortable experience for a reticent man. We can only guess at his thoughts about the play itself and its author.

To Swift, the theatre seems to have been a place where showing off, posturing, affectation and artificiality thrived, and his objections to the things he disliked about it were of course moral and intellectual as well as temperamental. It is the vanity of theatrical hangers-on, "the proud usurpers of the pit," that is one of his main targets in "Ode to Mr. Congreve," for example. Most of his criticism of what was actually presented in the theatre is directed to "spectacle" and the new and fashionable bastard genre of opera (to which his friend Charles Ford especially was addicted). He writes to Pope on January 11, 1721: "I have been much concerned for several years past, upon account of the publick as well as of myself, to see how ill a taste for wit and sense prevails in the world, which politicks and South-sea, and Party, and Opera's and Masquerades have introduced." (Correspondence, II, 368) Of opera, he has commented to Ambrose Philips, in a letter of March 8, 1709, "Poetry and good Sense are dwindling like Echo into Repetition and Voice." (Correspondence, I, 129) His most telling comment on opera, perhaps, is "A Cantata" (Williams, pp. 955-961), in which he effectively parodies the libretto style he has criticised to Philips. [In his headnote, however, Williams mentions only the tradition that Swift wrote "A Cantata" "in order to ridicule the attempt to imitate sounds in music."]

Swift's enthusiasm for The Beggar's Opera perhaps owed a good deal to its parodic elements. But as we can see from the letter quoted in the introduction to this study (see page 7 above), he admired the work most for its moral satire. In the poetry, his comparatively few specific allusions to plays are all made in satiric connections. He never refers to a play in the cause of praising anyone; in every case, the reference reinforces an indictment of some kind. Sometimes the play referred to is itself satiric. In "Mad Mullinix and Timothy," for instance, the quarrelsome

Timothy, flogging a dead political horse, is compared to "Martin Marrall, gaping on,/ Not minding when the Song was done" (43-44) [an allusion to Dryden's comedy, Sir Martin Mar-all, Or the Feign'd Innocence]. In "The Discovery" (see Williams, pp. 61-64), Lord Berkeley and Arthur Bushe are compared to the usurping Kings of Branford in The Rehearsal, the satire by George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham. Sometimes, however, we can go no further than to suggest that plays come readily to his mind when he is looking for ammunition, as in "A Serious Poem upon William Wood" (Williams, pp. 333-338), for example, with its punning references to Love in a Tub, Love in a Wood, and Love in a Maze (see lines 91-108). Swift also makes directly disparaging comments upon the works and practices of modern playwrights, sometimes naming them, as he does in "On Poetry: A Rapsody," when he ironically advises the aspiring critic to

Read all the Prefaces of Dryden,
For these our Criticks much confide in,
(Tho' meerly writ at first for filling
To raise the Volume's Price, a Shilling) (251-254).

But he may, perhaps, have other motives for sniping at Dryden. By the same token, considerations of party enmity may have something to do with Swift's attacks upon John Vanbrugh and Richard Steele as dramatists, in the poems on Vanbrugh's house (see Williams, pp. 78-81 and 105-110), and "The First Ode of the Second Book of Horace Paraphras'd" (Williams, pp. 179-184).

Those who would have us believe that Swift was "interested" in the stage of his own time remind us that he did write a play, Polite Conversation. Mayhew suggests that Swift himself may seriously have considered the possibility of its being performed. (See Mayhew, pp. 52-61.) But on the evidence of Polite Conversation itself, it is hard to believe that

this was a primary aim. There is little suggestion of dramatic development or play-like shape in the three scenes. The obvious aim is to satirise the vapidness of subject matter and the cliché-ridden language of conversation among the "polite". Had Swift subjected his material to the discipline of a well-developed plot, or any dramatic shaping at all, perhaps, he would have lost its inconsequentiality, one of the very things he was out to reproduce. Dramatic balance of the dialogue, also, could have been achieved only if he had sacrificed another apparent aim, that of including as many clichés as he possibly could. Mayhew gives an account of the stage presentations that did take place, the first of them in Swift's lifetime, but near to the time when his faculties began to decline. The heavy cutting to which the play was subjected on this occasion was no doubt necessary for other reasons than the need for making it short enough to be an afterpiece to Volpone. Its subsequent stage history (see Mayhew, pp. 61-72) suggests further that although Polite Conversation is dramatic in form, it is no stage play.

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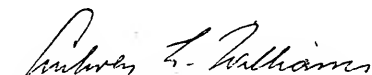
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Biographical Sketch

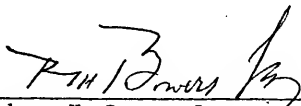
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